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The Magazine That Entertains

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VOL. XL.



### CHAPTER I.

T was near enough midning Shadow Room of the rette to have taken on a swirling life which is supported to the support of the s

The twang-de-ra-da-plunk-the drums and banjos swept to swirling around in purposelelike the life in a drop of imagnified some preposterous of times; clashing perfuments a masquerade as cleanline pagne gave a sheen to the daubed on the cheap white watervous restlessness of the beaus outrages on all the similataken by the men and the place for sparkle and gainterpreted it as the desire the drink and dance.

Amid all the riot of noise, perfumery, the man at the varing the entrance along alm and unruffled. He wore suit too much like a gentlem anything but a head waiter.

# LA ZINGARA





ER I.

midnight for the f the Café Pieren on that hectic, Supposed to be York by out-ofdway parasites, cing has become rried people who s social position. plunk-da-dada of wept the dancers rposeless eddies, op of something sterous number fumeries sought anliness; chamthe silhouettes hite walls. of the simultathe senses was and women of nd gayety; they esire to eat and

noise, color, and the velvet cord alone seemed wore his dress tentleman to be iter. "Table for four," pompously demanded a globular little man.

The head waiter appraised the party with practiced glance.

"Sorry, sir. Everything has been reserved."

Two youths and a girl who had been drinking too much were similarly turned away. Also a notorious Broadway lightfoot and the young heiress into whose heart and pocketbook he had recently danced his way.

Then, just as it seemed well established that in Tangoland head waiters alone compose the ruling classes, there came a couple to whom the autocrat of the silken cord was almost servile.

"Bon soir, m'amoiselle," with a low bow. "Good evening, Mr. Locke," with a dim reflection of his first bow.

"Bon soir, Louis," carelessly slipping off her black satin wrap so as to disclose the flame-colored lining.

She paused and surveyed the bobbing dancers, much as a great violinist might listen to a drum. Her dark, lazy eyes, like coals of passion sleeping beneath ashes of ennui, found nothing of interest to kindle them into flame. She languidly raised a slender hand, as if to make sure of her masses of straight,

blue-black hair, perhaps to display the emerald-eyed serpent that coiled about

her arm.

The crashing music stopped. The breathless, perspiring dancers, chattering, laughing, applauding their own feet with their hands, scuffled back to their tables. Then, as the noise subsided, the woman at the entrance, with her tall, square-jawed escort, crossed the floor to a reserved table in the far corner of the room. They vaguely reminded one of a graceful, sinuous tigress and a steel-limbed, cool-eyed hunter with the restraint to bide his time.

"La Zingara—it's La Zingara," women with jewels and men with jowls were busy informing each other. "It's almost time for her to dance. She

dances twice, you know."

"Yes, that's Philip Locke with her. Ever since he got back from Africa, or the north pole, or wherever it was—"

"Yes, every night-they're always

together."

"'The Ravens' was the best thing he ever wrote. Did you read 'The Ravens?' You know he used to be engaged to—"

"She's certainly easy to look at," commented a jowled one. "I simply adore his looks," said the jeweled one

with him.

If further evidence is needed that Philip Locke and La Zingara were great personages, it may be stated that they were allowed to order two glasses of French vichy and lemon juice with their caviar and toast. Mere ribbon clerks and millionaires are compelled to drink champagne in places of this sort.

After a casual remark or so, they sat in silence like people who really know each other. Locke gazed out over the room as if he were bringing something thousands and thousands of miles away very close to him. La Zingara gazed at a woman at the next table as if she were putting her thousands and thousands of miles away.

One more one-step—tata-ta, tataboom—men and women surging around the floor, while up on high the other gods once more made sport of poor Terpsichore. And then La Zingara danced.

"Anitra's Dance" it was, and a redcoated Hungarian quintet had taken the place of the ragaphone coons. The soul of Grieg's mood passed through the violins and entered the firm, supple body of La Zingara. Rhythmic swaying, little tripping runs, weaving, flowing, sparkling glints of tenseness-she herself was the music that set the violin strings vibrating into sound. Here, there, she wove her spell about the room. The jowled ones were too fascinated to tap time with their stubby feet, the jeweled ones too entranced to hum. All were spellbound in the thrall of her magic; all save Philip Locke, who, chin in hands, seemed to be gazing with his steady blue eyes out over some vast distance into the land of Tomorrow.

Zingara, almost in front of him, sank slowly, evenly, to one knee. Her arms floated out toward him. Eyes half closed, lips slightly parted, she paused an instant. Slowly his head turned, as if it were being drawn, lured, in spit of his thoughts. Their eyes met. He flushed. A flashing smile, and she was back in the center of the floor again, weaving, swaying, playing wonderful music with her beautiful body.

As she made a deep curtsy, touching the tips of her long fingers to her lips, there came a genuine burst of applause.

"You do not like my dancing," she accused Locke, when he had pulled out her chair for her. "You were not watching me."

(

"I like to sip my nectar from my own goblet. In a public drinking cup, it is no longer nectar."

"You think I dance for them?" indi-

cating the still-applauding patrons with a little gesture of contempt. "I loathe

"But you love loathing them."

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"You are jealous!" she exclaimed with a handclap of delight. "I knew I could make you love me. - I am so glad!" Eyes alight, she nodded to the leader of the waiting orchestra that she would accept the encore, and again took the center of the floor. This time it was a gypsy dance.

The wild music kindled her pulses. She was fire-now burning brightly, suddenly crackling into showers of sparks, then dying down into a steady glow, only to flare out again into scorching flame; faster, faster, darting tongues of fire, spurting, splutteringuntil she seemed one withering blaze of white-hot passion. And then—she stopped. It was over.

Just before resuming her seat, she acknowledged the noisy applause with a fitful nod. Then, eyes still alight, cheeks faintly glowing, she regarded Locke with a teasing smile.

"You like that?" she questioned.

"You think that was pretty?"

Her long lashes lowered protectingly against his gaze. His voice was tensely low.

"Yes, it was very pretty-like tropical thunder-mating tigers-oror- Just as soon as you give me back to myself, I'll try to tell you how very, very pretty I really thought it

"Phileep! You say such funny You almost make me think-" The flickering up of the applause just before its final dying away caught her attention. "Bah!" including the whole room with a sneer of the hand. "They clap; they want more! They see only the beauty-the joy. Little do they know the pricethe toil. They are fat-even the thin ones. They see only my grace and rhythm. What can they know of the

little Creole girl in New Orleans who was beaten and starved when she was still almost a baby, that she might point her toes more prettily; that she might gain such perfect muscle control that she could move her limbs without twitch or jerk-in flowing rhythm-like the flight of a soaring gull? What do they know of the racked bones and aching muscles of the long years in Kiralfy's ballets, when we learned to suffer and smile, suffer and smile? Like the woman there with her roses," resting her eyes on a drooping, lilylike blonde near by. "She only knows the beauty and the fragrance of them. She never thinks of the patient pruning and cutting back, the constant spraying, the endless care of them. She merely enjoys them for a few hours, and then -pouf!-they are wilted and thrown aside."

La Zingara sighed. A tear glistened in the corner of her eye. Philip Locke regarded her amusedly.

A clean-cut, well-groomed youth was approaching their table. He walked a little too straight to be entirely sober. His humorous brown eyes, abnormally bright, were fixed upon La Zingara.

"I beg your pardon," he said with exaggerated politeness, bending toward her, "but I trust you will permit me to tell you how very beautiful-how much I enjoyed-"

"How are you, Vanderhof?" inter-

rupted Locke sternly.

"Why-ah-hello, Locke, old chap! I didn't see you here. I just"-turning to La Zingara again—"I could not keep from thanking you. Your dancing-it was love, music, poetry! It was divine! I---"

"I am so glad," she told him naïvely. "You like my dancing? Then you like me. For my dancing-it is myself." Seeing the frown on Locke's face, she "Will you not sit even went further. down and join us?"

In response to Locke's perfunctory

invitation, Vanderhof ordered a brandy and soda. Zingara, smiling maliciously at Locke's displeasure, drew the young man's attention back to her with soft, purring words. He raved over her dancing again. She drew a deep sigh.

"But this"-she shuddered at the jarring, crashing accompaniment of the "coons"-"this is not music; this is not dancing. When there is real music, it takes me out of it all. I feel the soft, caressing nights of my native Indiathe cool, mysterious temple of the moon goddess rising up out of the tangled jungle, its crumbling columns almost touching the star-jeweled, velvet heavens, and everywhere silence-silencesave for the quick gliding of some evil serpent in the lush undergrowth, or the crackling of a twig under the soft padpad of an overcurious tiger, or-" She broke off, interrupted by the stopping of the music.

"Ah, you were born in India, then?" said Vanderhof, eager for her to go on. He had forgotten Locke, forgotten his drink, forgotten everything save the smoldering flame back of Zingara's

eves.

"Yes," she said, toying reminiscently with the emerald-eyed silver serpent that coiled about her arm. "My mother, Amrita, was a dancing girl in the great temple of the moon. She was beautiful even as the moon herself, and to her had descended the lithe grace of a thousand dancing girls before her. But one day, through some evil spell, came an English officer who had lost his way. They saw each other. Then I was born. The disgrace of it—a white infide! My mother was driven out in shame. Amrita, the favored of the gods, was cursed and stoned.

"She fled to the hills. How she lived I do not know. The gods must have been a little kind, more kind than their priests. And in return, she taught me to dance to them, to pay them back a

little, perhaps, for the sin of my mother, And that is how—that is why—"

She stopped short and looked be wilderedly about her, as if suddenly conscious of her surroundings—the eating and drinking, the men and women scuffling and bobbing about the floor to the exaggerated tempo of the "coous." A woman at the next table was noisily complaining about something to the waiter.

"You shouldn't kick so much, Dotty," a fat man told her. "Your stockings don't match your eyes." And the rest of their party laughed hilariously, for

that was wit with them.

"You are wonderful," said Vanderhof, coming out from the spell she had woven and taking a deep draft of his drink.

"It reminds me," said Locke, "of another dancer I knew—almost as wonderful, almost as heavenly a dancer as you. But with her it was no god-given gift. It meant beatings and hunger and bruises. She was a Creole, born in New Orleans. After years and years—"

"You make me seeck!" said Zingan

contemptuously.

As she turned her head, the czar of the silken cord was unctuously conducting a party of four to a table that had been held in reserve all evening. The host was a pompous, elderly man with a cotton-batting mustache, the type of bon vivant one sees tasting sauces with such keen relish in the billboard advertisements. Behind him came a handsome, well-preserved woman-his wife probably-and a tall, slender girl with creamy skin and masses of radiant golden hair. Bringing up the rear was a foreign-looking man with tightly waxed black mustaches and bright, twinkling eyes nimble enough to include many women without neglecting any one particular woman. As they were being seated, La Zingara turned inquiringly to Locke and Vanderhof, to find

the latter, slightly flustered, returning the bow of some one in the party. Locke also bowed.

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"It's certainly a bit embarrassing," Vanderhof mumbled in explanation. "I declined their invitation to the theater to-night—suddenly called to the country and all that sort of thing, y'know—and now they find me here. I really think I'd better—"

He made his way over to their table. The father and mother acknowledged his greeting with polite surprise. The girl, raising her eyebrows slightly, turned to the foreigner, whose white teeth were ever flashing in quick smiles. Of the whole party he was the only one who seemed at all glad to see Vanderhof. His greeting seemed almost gloatingly effusive.

Vanderhof flushed slightly. Then, with a transparent assumption of indifference, he picked his way out between the tables to the entrance. There he paused, searched the room until his eyes found those of La Zingara, and bowed.

"I like your friend," she told Locke when he had gone. "He is a nice boy —très gentil."

"What?" Locke had been gazing absently at the girl and the foreigner. "Oh, you mean Vanderhof. That's Tommy Vanderhof, you know. And those are the Leeds that he was talking to. And I think that must be Prince Petrovitch. I'm not sure. He reached this country after I left."

"That was Tomniy Vanderhof?"
For La Zingara read her Sunday papers faithfully. "The one who—— But I thought he was supposed to be engaged to this Antoinette Leeds?"

"He is. Or at least they were. Then this prince person came along, they tell me, and Mrs. Leeds—— Wéll, you know what women with everything they don't want are about titles. Old Man Leeds never was very strong for Vanderhof, and besides, he's utterly his

wife's husband. Naturally, the more the prince began to hang around the house, the more Vanderhof began to sulk and knock about. You really can't blame a young girl very much if she loses her head a little against such a combination."

"And so that is the beautiful Antoinette Leeds," murmured La Zingara, with a trace of awe. "She is pretty, isn't she?"

"Pretty! She's the most delicately beautiful creature I ever saw. The Creator carved her with a chisel. She makes these other women look as if they had been stamped out with a butter mold!"

La Zingara did not relish such enthusiasm. She finally decided, after a more critical examination:

"Her mouth is too small. She's made of china." Then, turning her attention to the vivacious foreigner: "And the prince?"

Locke shrugged.

An emissary from the orchestra respectfully asked Zingara if she were ready for her final dance, "Visions of Salome." Still watching the prince, she vaguely nodded.

"I do not like that prince," she said, without removing her glance. "He is a very wicked man, I think. If you watch his eyes while I am dancing, Phileep, I will try to show you what I mean."

### CHAPTER II.

Sunday morning Philip Locke wandered into his college club on Gramercy Park. The members, being typical college graduates, knew little of current literature and less of exploration. Locke was to them simply "Keyhole" Locke, the man who made that circus catch in the third game at the Polo Grounds in 1910. It was the one retreat in town where Locke felt safe from having shop talked to him.

The lounge was deserted save for one

man, who, chin on chest, was dejectedly sprawled out in a squashy leather chair. As Locke entered, he looked up. It was Tommy Vanderhof,

"Hello!"

"Hello, Vanderhof!"

Locke took a couple of Sunday papers from the big center table and settled himself in a chair beside Vanderhof's. He glanced over the news sections.

"Have a drink?" drawled Vanderhof after a few moments' pause.

"No. thanks. Too early."

"It is a bit early here, I suppose. But in Parts it must be late in the afternoon. And my sympathies are all with the French." He brought his hand down on the bell. "Let's see," he mused, as the boy answered his summons. "Bring me-oh, a brandy and soda, I guess. With no ice." Without seeing Locke's steady blue eyes, he vaguely felt their disapproval. sought to justify himself: "Brandy, I find, will get one farther downtown in the morning than almost anything else. And while to-day's Sunday, and I don't expect to have to go anywhere, it's always well to be prepared."

Locke smiled absently. He was gazing off at that vague area just beyond the farther edge of the ceiling where so many writers seem to find their inspira-

tion.

"What are you doing these days, Locke?" inquired Tommy, intent upon conversation. "Still writing things?"

"Not actually writing. Just trying to straighten out a plot in my mind so I can begin to write. It was running along so easily. And now, when I'm almost at the climax, I suddenly find myself up against it. Hero and heroine—nice young New York pair," he explained, half to himself. "Bright dialogue—whimsical little twists here and there—everything going smoothly. Then villain butts in—distinguished-foreign-nobleman stuff—heroine nat-

urally a bit dazzled. Everybody know it's just the glamour, of course, except the hero. He becomes jealous as a pup and begins to go to the bad a bit-drink, you know."

Vanderhof glanced at him sharply, but Locke apparently was still picking thoughts from the far side of the ceil-

ing.

"That's where I'm stuck," he went on. "If he's going to be such a weak ass as all that, the girl really will stop caring for him. I've got to bring him up with a jerk—get him to pull himself together again—or else the whole story will be upset. If he's so weak—"

"That's a cinch," said Tommy, setting down his glass after a long pull, "Why don't you have him meet some serious old horse face in a club or some place—some kind-hearted old josser who wants to sprinkle sand on the hero's path of life so he'll quit skidding. But he's too full of tart to go at it directly, so he tells the fallen hero all about a similar case and asks his advice. Hero tumbles right away—he's quick as a wink, you know—and—"

"You go to the devil!" laughed Locke.

"Yessir," said Tommy meekly, taking another long pull at his brandy and soda. "Seriously, though, Locke, you know I think I will cut out drinking entirely. Not on moral grounds. Merely as a matter of economy. I've found that it's really very much cheaper to shave."

Locke looked at him inquiringly.

"Yes, much cheaper," mused Tommy.
"You see, a chap gets up about noon, rubs his hand across his chin, and then starts out for the barber's. But as he draws nearer and nearer, he begins to dread lying back in a chair and having some foreign nobleman in advanced circumstances maul his face around and breathe all over him. He begins to wonder if he really does need a shave so very badly after all. He drops into

t

a rather decent-looking saloon to see by their mirror. After a drink or two, he finds that no one in the world would ever notice it, so he drifts round to the club. About half past cocktail time, his face is as smooth as a babe's-he knows it without even feeling. what's the net result? He has spent all the way from five to ten dollars making himself sure of it, and the following day he has to drink twice as hard to get anything like as satisfactory results. I'm going to quit drinking." He rubbed his hand across his chin. "Just to prove it, I'm going to drop around now and let Henry shave me."

He got up, stretched, and ambled out. Locke resumed his newspaper. Idly turning over the supplements of one of the yellow journals, he stopped short

with sudden interest.

"Is the Mysterious Zingara Beautiful Aztec Princess?" ran the headline clear across the page. In the center was a splashy line-cut illustration. Before a lithe young woman, scantily clad in armlets and clinging, nondescript draperies. In front of her, at arm's length, she held a shallow bowl from which a thin, wavering column of incense arose. At her feet reverently knelt a typical tropical explorer—pith helmet, khaki, feld glasses, and putties. The face was as much like Locke's as the face of a newspaper illustration is apt to be.

He skipped hurriedly over the introductory paragraphs of the article—La Zingara, the mysterious—luxurious apartment—incense—leopard skins.

Ah, here was the real beginning of the story: "'Where do I come from? What is my past?" she repeated with a tired smile. 'That is what they all ask. What does it matter? 'Is it not enough that I am here?' She lighted a dainty cigarette and sank back among the silken cushions. As she languidly regarded the slowly rising smoke, she

seemed to see in it visions of other days, of distant lands.

"'Would it surprise you very much,' she finally said, 'if I should tell you that, until a few short years ago, I had never seen city or town or any of the things which your people in their ignorance call civilization? Where do I come from? I shall never know, for

the way back is lost forever.

"'Somewhere deep in the heart of the jungles of Central America lies buried the great temple of the sun god, where the devout ones who escaped the defiling touch of the conquering Spaniard faithfully await the return to earth of the mighty Ouetzalcoatl, traditional ruler of the Aztecs. In each generation the most beautiful of all the noble-born maidens are from childhood trained in grace and the arts of pleasing. When they have reached the age for marriage. the most favored of these is selected to be the bride of Quetzalcoatl, and, should he return to earth in her generation, to make him content to remain and lead his people back to their former splendor and glory. She dances to propitiate and lure her future lord while the priests pray.

"Year after year she waits and dances, waits and dances. At first she is thrilled and honored by the homlage paid her by even the priests themselves. But as time goes on, and as the other maidens, one by one, find lovers among the youths of the temple, there awakens within her a yearning, a feeling of utter loneliness. She dances and dances and dances, in the ever-dimming hope that it may be she, and not some unborn maiden centuries hence, who shall lure the mighty Quetzalcoatl back to his

earthly kingdom.

"Finally, one day when she felt her desolation more keenly than ever before, couriers came from the distant outposts of the little empire with word that a tall, godlike young stranger, handsome of face and straight of limb,

had chanced upon the hidden trail to the sacred city. He and his Indian servants had pitched their camp at sundown beside the pool of the graven frog at the entrance to the smaller cañon. The waters had been drugged at the mouth of the spring above, and the stranger and his followers were sleeping deeply. What were the sun bride's wishes?

"'Emotions crowded her breast. In the memory of man, no stranger before had found his way through the protecting jungles to even the uttermost rays of the sun temple. Could it be, after all these centuries of yearning and waiting- She mastered herself and spoke with calm authority: "Let their leader be carried thither. Carry the others back the way they came, as far as may be before they waken."

"'The couriers gone, she threw off her restraint and danced-danced as she had never danced before-danced that her long years of dancing might at

last be rewarded."

Locke threw the paper to the floor.

"Slush!" he growled. But his curiosity was greater than his disgust. He picked it up again and resumed reading latest of Zingara's many life this

stories.

"'At dawn of the following day, she stood before the great temple, holding outstretched toward the East an offering of sacred incense. As the fragrant smoke rose propitiously in the still air, a tiny flame of molten gold kindled the path of the rising sun; the quetzal bird in a neighboring coffee tree spread out his gorgeous plumage; and, silently, out of the forest came four arrow-straight guards, half guiding, half carrying their still-dazed prisoner. As they reached the maiden, they fell back, leaving him standing, dazzled and bewildered, before her. Slowly his eyes, which had been like two dull turquoises, took on the light of sapphires. With outstretched arms, he sank to his knees and spoke, rapidly, ardently. She did not understand his words, nor he the words of her reply, but their eyes met and needed no words.""

Locke groaned.

"That woman's imagination," he told himself, "makes the 'Arabian Nights' read like a telephone directory."

The priests of the temple, the story went on to say, had the stranger brought before them. That he could neither speak nor understand their language was proof to them that this could not be the long-awaited Quetzalcoatl, but was some hostile impostor. princess first pleaded. stormed, but to no avail. He was imprisoned in the inner vault of the temple to await the following dawn, when he would be laid upon the ancient sacrificial stone and made to expiate his sacrilege in penetrating the holy precincts. The princess was ordered to her quarters.

There, according to La Zingara, she broke down and wept. To Xenia, her faithful slave woman, who had been given to her as playmate when a child, she poured out the whole miserable story of her hopes and anguish. Xenia, from a former lover, a fallen priest, had learned the secret of the water lock to the temple vault. The first pocket in the great stone slab must be filled with water-count seven-then the third hole-count four-then the second hole-and the slab could be lifted by the iron ring. They would gather as much food as they could carry and secrete it in the gum grove back of the palace. They must make their escape at midnight while the priests slept. There would be a moon.

Locke skipped hurriedly over the account of the thrilling rescue and the flight through the hidden trail into the cañon of the shadows. Weird forms, silhouetted against the precipitous walls, the chattering of monkeys in the

trees thousands of feet above them, and the eerie call of the watchful quetzal bird all added to the night horrors of the jungle. When, faint with the pain. of the jagged stones upon her tender little feet, the princess begged the stranger to go on without her, he lifted her in his strong arms, clasped her close to his breast, and stumbled blindly on. One hundred yards more and they would be at the mouth of the cañon, where they would find canoes awaiting them on the bank of the great river. But they could now hear faint sounds of their pursuers reverberating down the walls of the cañon, like the forewarning ghosts of some incredible swiftness. Fifty yards more, and then . -as if struck by some mighty invisible fist-they were thrown to the ground.

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An age-long moment of sickening calm, and then a ripping, tearing crash and the roar of tumbling rocks.

When they came to themselves and looked behind them, there was no canon. Only a solid mass of bowlders and uprooted trees. The road to the sacred city was closed forever. It was as if the mighty Quetzalcoatl himself, taking compassion upon the maiden's newborn love, had granted her with his own all-powerful hand her freedom.

The newspaper story went on:

"'When at last we—er—they, I
mean—' La Zingara broke off in
confusion. And then: 'But here comes
Xenia with our tea.'

"A tall copper-colored woman, with the high cheek bones of the Central American Indian and the majestic bearing of an ancient race, entered with the tea things.

"'And then what?' your reporter

"But La Zingara only smiled mysteriously and gently shook her head.

"'No,' she said. 'I have told enough.'"

Locke scaled the paper from him. "Told too damn much!" he muttered.

He was angry. Devoid of false modesty, he could not help but know his reputation as an explorer, and he had been seen almost every night of late with La Zingara. To people reading this wild dream, she had made a laughingstock of him. Let her play with her imagination as much as she liked, but she mustn't drag him into it. He went to the telephone and called her

"La Zingara?" His tone was reserved and stern. "This is Philip Locke. I've just been reading your interview in the *Planet*. What—"

"Oh, Phileep!" cooed the voice on the other end of the wire. "You sound angry."

"I am angry."

"Then do come up right away, Phileep. I love best of all to see you when you are angry."

Slamming up the receiver, he ordered

### CHAPTER III.

Locke entered one of the most overpowering of New York's Upper West Side apartment houses. In the entrance hall, artificial palms clustered about gigantic artificial-marble columns. artificial lady or two swept disdainfully past him. He asked for La Zingara and gave his name to the boy at the switchboard. Worked in the mosaic of the floor he noticed an elaborate heraldic design, and beneath it the name of the building, "Saulsbury Arms." Why were they always named something-or-other arms, he wondered. Why not legs? The Winter Garden Legs, he mused, would make a beautiful name for a place like this.

"Go right up," the boy at the switchboard told him, motioning toward the elevator.

The door to Zingara's apartment was opened by "a tall copper-colored woman," he noted with inward amusement, who had "the high cheek bones of

the Central American Indian and the majestic bearing of an ancient race."

"How are you, Xenia?" giving her his hat and stick.

"Come right in, Mistah Locke," she told him in soft North Carolina ac-

He strolled into the big front room, while she, as he supposed, went down the hall to announce his coming to her

mistress.

Heavy wine-colored curtains drugged the daylight into languid dimness as it passed through the windows. Locke needed no light. He knew the room well-the silk burnt-umber hangings of the walls, the rich crimson velour portières, the low, deep divan with its tiger skins and cushions, the great soft-toned rug, the carved teak taboret, the mellow old ivories, the antique incense burner haunted by the ghosts of fragrant spices. Indeed, so perfectly blended was the atmosphere of the place that the faint odor of incense and the seductive, caressing furnishings seemed but natural translations of each other.

Locke took his stand by the window, looking out across the river at the Jersey Palisades. His face was set. He was indignant, and one could see that he did not intend to have his righteous indignation lured away from him by What could be any vampire room. keeping La Zingara? He turned and took a few steps toward the door, then paused. There was no sound from the other end of the hall. looked at his watch; not because he wanted to know what time it wasmerely as an unconscious expression of impatience. He turned and slowly paced toward the far end of the room. Why didn't they light the lights? was so dark over there by the divan that one could almost imagine--- He stopped and stared. A moment of silence, and then-a low, contralto chuckle. A click, and the soft rosecolored lights disclosed La Zingara, half reclining among a mass of silken cust-

"I thought you would never find me" she said, much as if they had been play.

ing a game.

He still stared at her. She went on: "At first I said nothing because I thought that of course you knew I was here. And then I said nothing because I saw that you did not know I was here. And you looked so funny and cross. Phileep."

As she straightened up, a great hall of tawny fluff that had been coiled to beside her slowly stretched itself out into a magnificent Angora cat. It lazily arched its back and then, apparently offended at having been disturbed jumped noiselessly down and stalked off to resume its nap among some cushions on the other side of the room. La Zingara followed the animal with her eyes.

"Is not Isis a beautiful cat-and graceful?" she said. "Do you not think

she is a little like me?"

"I think that sometimes you are very much like her," said Locke.

"You are still angry," she decided, examining him critically, "and it no

longer amuses me."

"I am angry. I've just been reading this trash about you in the Planet. What they say about you is none of my business, of course. For all I care, you can be an Indian goddess, an Aztec princess, or a marooned mermaid-

"I have never said I was a maroon mermaid," she denied with quiet dig-

nity.

-but you must not make a laughingstock of me. When you begin to

drag me into-

"But I did not drag you into it. Phileep. Your name was not even mentioned in the article. I particularly asked the newspaper reporter not to mention it. And he was vairy nice. If my mind was filled with you while I was talking to him, could I help that? You are not fair, Phileep. Come over here beside me. I want to talk to you."

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Her eyes glistened with moisture and her tone was one of injury. She made room for him. He hesitated a moment, and then, with the well-what-do-youwant air of a guilty schoolboy, seated himself on the edge of the divan.

"Phileep, you have almost said that—that I do not"—she hesitated over so awful an accusation—"tell the truth. Because sometimes I tell you I was a little Creole girl with Kiralfy, and sometimes I say I was the daughter of a dancing girl in an Indian temple, or an Aztec princess—because sometimes I say my past was this, sometimes that, you think I am not telling the truth.

"But my moods vary. No one is always the same. Each mood is real. And every present has its own past. Would you have me tell a past that is a lie to my present mood, just in order to be consistent? One's past and present must harmonize-like colors. Look." She slid gracefully off the divan and went over to the mantel. "Look," she repeated, facing him with a little vase in each hand. One was red, one was blue. "These do not harmonize. This red and blue together form a lie."

She turned, flung the blue one, shattering, into the fireplace, and triumphantly replaced the red one on the mantel. The light in her eyes, the glimpse of white teeth between slightly parted lips—— She was alluring, irresistible. Locke took a step toward her, his arms and eyes a little hungry with desire.

"Zingara!"

She eluded him with catlike economy of effort and motion.

"Yes, Phileep?" And then, with exasperating matter-of-factness: "And, oh, Phileep, I almost forgot. After one more week, I am going to leave the Café Pierrette. I am not going to

dance anywhere—for a while. I knew you would be glad. I asked you up today just to tell you."

"Then what will you do?" he asked. "Give lessons? If you wanted to form a class, I could manage to——"

"Never!" she said decidedly. "Dancing cannot be taught except to those who feel it. It is the expression of a mood, the language of the soul. Why should I try to teach these New York women the expression of that which they are incapable of feeling? Their dancing is a lie. They tell falsehoods with their feet and bodies. Do you think I would teach them to lie more cleverly?"

He gazed at her in wonder.

"No," she continued, lighting a cigarette, "I am not going to do anything. I am going to rest. I decided last night. I am going to take a little cottage up the Sound—just Xenia and myself—and rest and rest and," stretching her arms luxuriously above her head, "rest. The soft night breezes, the moonlight on the water—it will be divine."

"Hm. Got your place picked yet?"

"Yes. Nekewood."

"Nekewood?" Why, that's where the Leeds go. And Tommy Vanderhof."

"Yes, it was Mr. Vanderhof who told me. I saw him again at the Pierrette last night, before you called for me. He sat at my table while you were at your stupid old explorers' dinner."

"But-" He did not finish, and

there was a moment's pause.

"Mr. Vanderhof is vairy much in love with Miss Leeds, isn't he?" she mused reminiscently.

"Why? Did he talk about her?"

"No. That was just it. He was so vairy careful to keep from talking about her. I think he is nice, your friend Tommy Vanderhof, if only he did not need a shave so much. I told him so."

Locke remembered Tommy's resolu-

tion at the club that morning. Evidently Zingara had made an impression.

"Have you arranged about this cot-

tage at Nekewood yet?"

"No, Phileep. I thought you would do that. Mr. Tommy Vanderhof offered to, but I have known him such a little while, and——"

"Certainly," agreed Locke.

"Thank you, Phileep. And now, while you are telephoning for the car, I will be getting on my things. Just to show you that I forgive you for having been angry with me, I am going to let you take me to luncheon—up at the Claremont, where I can see the sunlight on the river."

### CHAPTER IV.

It is only when seen through champagne-colored glasses that the white-light resorts of New York seem alluring. When Tommy Vanderhof stopped drinking, the night life of the Tenderloin began to bore him. When a man begins to notice the shape of Gayety's feet and hands, he pays less attention to the lure of her eyes. He began to go down to his office regularly and to take more of an interest in his work.

For the first two days after his change of living, he thoroughly hated himself. He had acted like a jealous fool, he told himself. Tony Leeds—Lord, he didn't suppose she'd ever speak to him again. On the third day, he began to wonder if she ever would speak to him again. Thursday he decided to find out and called. As his taxi drew up in front of the Leeds house in the East Seventies, he thought he caught a glimpse of Tony at the first-floor window, and gayly waved his hand.

"Miss Leeds?" he inquired confidently.

"Miss Leeds is not at home," the man informed him with dignity. Tommy's joy evaporated through

dropped jaw.

"But—" And then he went, crestfallen, back to his taxi. He drove down to the University Club. He felt very much like a drink, but, just to get even with Tony without her knowing it, he didn't take one. He became so pleased with himself in consequence that he finally went into the writing room and scratched off a note:

Tony Dear: I was sorry to find you were not feeling at home when I called. Won't you let me run up for you and see if we can't find some place for tea that is home like? The Plaza, for example. I'll wait here until I hear from you. Yours without a struggle,

By the time he had handed the note to a messenger, he was so pleased with himself that he again had to keep from

taking a drink.

However, if it hadn't been for tacless generalship on the part of Tony's mother, Tommy's note would probably have been treated as a mere scrap of paper. Mrs. Leeds was present when Tony tore it open and read it hurriedly through.

"No answer," Tony told the waiting maid, with an air of indignant dignity. She passed the note over to her mother.

"Did you ever hear of such imperti-

nence?" said Mrs. Leeds.

And right here she made her tactical blunder. She should have advanced weak excuses for Tommy, in a mildly argumentative way that would have goaded Tony into bitter denunciation of him. Instead, she launched into denunciation herself, thereby driving Tony to his defense.

"I don't see how he dares! After his behavior the other night! Deliberately evading our invitation the way he did in order to be with that dancing

creature at the Pierrette!"

"That was just accident, mother. Tommy did explain that much. She was with Philip Locke, the writer. They say he is simply crazy about her-"

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"Pooh!" which is apoplectic for "I know better." "How can you defend any one who has treated you so insultingly? Well!" She compressed her lips to keep from saying, "I don't know what the world is coming to. Now, when I was a girl," and so forth. With which she left the room.

Tony drew a deep sigh, expressive of youth's patient tolerance for age. She had not been defending Tommy. He had been perfectly beastly, of course, but that was no reason for—

She picked up the note and read it through again. In spite of herself, she smiled a little. It was so like Tommy. She didn't mean ever to feel the same way toward him again, of course, but— To think of the narrow escape she had had! They would actually have been engaged-if it hadn't been for the butler's coming in just when he did. And after that the prince. She gave a little shudder-or thrillor something. No, she told herself decidedly, she could never feel the same way toward Tommy Vanderhof again. And he might just as well understand it once and for all. It would be much more satisfactory for all concerned to have it frankly out with him.

And that is how she came to meet him for tea that afternoon at one of the most fashionable of New York's rolled-gold hotels.

The table he had reserved was in the corner farthest from the music, so that the instruments blended rather than competed. The room was crowded with beautiful clothes, more or less becomingly inflated with people, and the constant chatter gave Tommy and Tony greater privacy than they could have obtained in some quieter place.

"Well?" suggested Tony, when she had poured the tea and the waiter had departed.

Tommy gazed sentimentally at the canope of caviar and drew a mournful sigh. "The last time we ate caviar together," he gently reminded her, "was at the Renshawes' dance. And afterward, in the conservatory—over back of the big palms——"

"You needn't remind me of it," she said coldly.

"I'm glad of that. I was afraid you were trying to forget it."

"Tonmy, if this is what you brought me to hear, I think we might just as well be going. I thought perhaps, from your note, that you finally realized——"

"I am—I do," he hastened to assure her. "It was the caviar. I just wanted to tell you, Tony, that I know I've been very rude, and I'm sorry. I've acted like a perfect fool, but—that's all over now. I'm going to forget everything——"

"Everything?" thinking of the beautiful dancer.

"Well, pretty nearly everything," thinking of the prince. "So can't we be—er—friends? That is, can't you be a friend? And I'll act like one—honest, Tony."

"Why, really, Tommy, there's nothing to forget." Then, before he had time to remind her of anything, "And as long as we're both going to be at Nekewood this summer, of course we'll be friends. When are you going up? We open the house two weeks from tomorrow."

"I'm going up to the bungalow Friday. And, Tony——"

"Yes, Tommy?"

"Oh, nothing, darn it! Now that we're friends."

Five o'clock Friday afternoon found Tommy in the swirling human eddies of the great marble concourse of the railroad station. Creatures were darting hither and thither, every which way. At the ticket gate he collided with some

one, drew back to let the other pass, and recognized Philip Locke.

"Hello! You off on this train, too?" asked Locke. "Nekewood?"

"Right-o," said Tommy.

A quarter-of-a-mile walk down a thriftily lighted passage brought them to their train. They were fortunate in finding seats together.

"Lordy, but I'm tired!" said Tommy,

as he plumped himself down.

"Everybody's tired at this hour," Locke told him. "It's the let-down from the day's work."

"But I haven't been working to-day," objected Tommy. He mused a few mo-

ments.

"But you feel tired from it just the same," suggested Locke. "Everybody does. That proves that man is meant to work. Nature makes him tired at the end of the day, anyway—just as if he had been working. So why not work?"

"I get you. Like maternal instinct in women who've never had children. Nature meant 'em to have 'em." Just then the train crash-banged with the shock of putting on an extra car. "What the deuce! Are they rehearsing for a wreck or something?"

At last the train started.

"What are you doing up at Nekewood?" asked Tommy. "Going to be with us all summer—or just for a few days?"

"Just over to-morrow, this trip. La Zingara—you met her the other night, you remember—asked me to look for a house for her up there. She wants a quiet place to rest in for a bit. Come to think of it, she said it was you who suggested Nekewood."

"Me?" For a moment Tommy seemed puzzled. "Oh, yes, I remember. The night after I met her with you—at the Café Pierrette. I was telling her about it when the prince—"

"The prince?"

"Yes, old Petrovitch. He came up

for a dance just then and—oh, I don't know. I just sort of found I wasn't there when they came back."

Locke scowled. La Zingara had not mentioned the prince when she had told him of meeting Tommy.

"What do you know about Petrovitch, anyhow?" asked Tommy.

"Why, nothing much. His family's the real thing over in Russia, and he's enormously wealthy. Not one of those noblemen for the American export trade only. Supposed to have come over here on some sort of munitions business, I think."

"Rotten bird morally, though, isn't he?" asked Tommy hopefully. "Too darn much eyework and flattery and that sort of thing. Makes an indecent exposure of his manners before ladies—you know what I mean. But this is nice talk from me," with a laugh. "Anybody might think I didn't like him."

"Well," conceded Locke, "according to gossip in Petrograd a couple of years ago, his love of flowers did occasionally lead him into other people's gardens."

They lapsed into silence. Tommy fell to musing upon which would hurt the prince most—punching him between the eyes or stealing his perfumery. Locke, with the novelist's instinct, began to study the people about him. The two women gabbling across the aisle-rich clothes and poor minds, he mentally classified them. The little man in front of them, solemnly absorbing the comic section of an evening paper-if his ears had not been set close enough to his head to hold a lead pencil, his whole career would have been ruined; he was a born clerk. The young woman directly back of them, with the dressy voice-

The train slowed up, stuttered a little, and finally came to an abrupt stop. "What station's this?" wondered

Locke, peering out the window.
"Oh, this isn't a station," Tommy as

sured him cheerily. "This is an express train-only stops in between stations, you know. It always used to stop at just about this spot last summer. see, this is a pretty temperamental sort of a railroad. That's what's been the trouble with it. It's always been run by a lot of hard-headed, prosaic business men who have no sympathy with temperament. They try to make their trains stop at regular fixed stations that have been built previously without the slightest regard for the trains' personal inclinations. What they should do, of course, is to run their trains over the route first, find out where they stop naturally, and build their stations accordingly."

"Well," said Locke, "if the trains stop at about the same places every trip, I don't see why it wouldn't be a wonderful scheme to buy up all the land around the natural stops and put up private stations. You could more than get your money back by selling

off lots."

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"Good plan," assented Tommy.

At last, with much whistling and snorting, the train started up again.

Just before they finally drew into Nekewood, Tommy asked:

"Putting up at the inn? I've got a car at the station and I'll be glad to run you over."

"Why, yes. Thanks."

"Who's going to take you around tomorrow? Douglas? Get him to show you the Emmons place. Right down on the water on a little inlet of its own, and it's so quiet that at low tide you can hear the clams on the beach."

Over the bumpy roads, deeply rutted from the spring thaw, conversation languished. As they rounded a curve, the crisp salt air of the Sound hit them sharply.

"Ah!" breathed Locke.

"I hate a man who wears jewelry," mumbled Tommy, thinking aloud.

### CHAPTER V.

The house Locke had chosen for La Zingara was at the tip of a narrow cove, a little dagger of water with which the Sound had stabbed the land in some lovers' quarrel of nature. The rocky shores on both sides were studded with velvety-green cedars that stood out like emeralds against the paler trees of the background.

La Zingara reclined in a wicker chaise longue on the terrace off her living room, gazing dreamily out through the cove across the open Sound to the purple shores of Long Island beyond. She was very much obliged to Phileep for finding such a beautiful setting for her. She would thank him again. He would probably be over for tea before long. He had arrived that morning at the inn in Nekewood proper, just around the point, and expected to stay a fortnight. Dear Phileep!

The sun, molding golden filigree work in the tallest treetops, blinded her She moved a little and turned her head. Her glance fell upon a carved sandalwood jewel box on the wicker table beside her. She reached languidly toward it, opened it, and drew out a curious chain of gems. As she held it up by one end, her eyes lighted with the hard cruelty of a tigress' eyes. The chain was composed of various stones and metals, graven with crests and arms, as if they had been taken from signet rings and linked together gold. There were amethysts, bloodstones, sapphires, jasper, jade, lapis lazuli, onyx, sardonyx, one a carnelian, and many of plain gold and silver. Above the device on two of them were graven coronets. Zingara smiled a little as she gazed at these, as if in reminiscence of certain special triumphs.

At a step in the French window, she let the chain fall to her lap and turned.

"Mistah Locke," Xenia, the North Carolina Aztec, announced. "He——" But Philip was right behind her.

"Hello, lady!"

"Hello, Phileep," extending a hand to him. "Xenia, we will be ready for tea in a few minutes. We will have it out here."

Philip lighted cigarettes for both of them and drew a chair up opposite her.

"Well, so you like it. Good! What do you do with yourself all day long? Do you go round to the Beach Club much? Saw Tommy Vanderhof at the inn for a moment, and he told me that he had put you up there."

"Yes, he has been vairy nice. I go to the club sometimes in the morning to watch the others. But I do most of my bathing here—off the rocks there—and

I can dress in the house."

"And how do you like the people?"
What he meant was how had the people liked her. "Have you met many of

them? Who's here?"

"Well, there is Prince Petrovitch, of course. He is stopping with the Leeds. He has been vairy kind-when he is alone. But when he is with Miss Leeds -I think she must be vairy jealoushe is always so absorbed that he scarcely sees me. Then there is a perfect old dear, Major Coyden." Philip remembered the major-one of the chronically attentive bon-vivant type whose taste in dress is thirty years younger than his liver. "And there is young Dickie Bankhart, and Sumner Sayles- You should see Sumner dive, Phileep." These two were callow college youths who would consider nothing more devilish than knowing a famous dancer. "Then-let me seethere is Anson Stockly"-a painter who was so busy being artistic that he didn't have time to be an artist-"and Mr. Chetworth. He has a wonderful motor boat, Phileep, but I do not think his wife likes me-vairy much."

Philip also knew Chetworth-a bald,

roundish old nuisance who danced the one-step too much as if he were trying to occupy the space his partner occupied.

"That's fine," Locke told her with-

out much enthusiasm.

It was as he had feared. The wrong sort of men were enthusiastic about her. The right sort of women had judged her by the wrong sort of men and had held aloof. However, as long as she herself did not notice it, what difference did it make?

Xenia came with the tea, and Ia Zingara pushed herself up in her chaise longue so that she might serve it. As she did so, the chain of signets slipped from her lap and clattered to the tiled floor. Locke, about to say something, stopped as his eyes fastened upon the chain.

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"I forgot," said Zingara, stooping to pick it up. "You do not like my cap-

tive seals."

"I think you know that I do not. I should think——" He broke off, got up, and took a few steps toward the Sound. Then, turning: "I should think you yourself would loathe them, I should think you would want to forget——"

She was regarding him thoughtfully. "You are a hunter, Phileep. You think only of the huntsman." Isis, the Angora, having divined tea in some mysterious catlike manner, had come out upon the terrace and leaped to Zingara's side, where she lay purring violently. There was something strangely alike in the lazy grace of cat and mistress, in the wild fire slumbering back of the silky gentleness of their eyes, in the very attitude of huntedness beneath their superficial trustfulness. never think of the hunted-of us poor women and lions and tigers and deer, even the little birds-unless it is to put us out of our misery more quickly, once you have brought us down. And even that is not out of real sympathy for the

hunted; it is merely to gratify the vanity of the hunter—it is a sop to what he calls his good sportsmanship.

"No, no, no, Phileep," as he started to speak, "you must let me finish." She picked up an end of the signet chain and held it dangling before her. "If a hunted tigress turns upon the hunter who has come to kill and tears and claws him-is that unfair? No, that is the chance he takes, you say. Well, then, what difference does it make whether the hunter's ammunition be powder and shot or-jewels and luxury? And if, when the hunter kills, he keeps the tiger's pelt or the elk's antlers as a trophy of the chase, is it strange or wrong that I should like to keep my trophies, too?"

She drew the chain idly through her fingers, stopping at an amethyst, one of

the two with a coronet.

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"This one—you remember? And yet did he not richly deserve it? 'Twas he or I—and I won. It was like that tiger of yours—the big one whose skin you gave me for my divan. The desperate struggle, the hairbreadth escape, the sudden and unexpected triumph——It is the most precious of all my trophies. You like it?" holding it out toward him.

The cat, purring loudly, was rubbing

its head against her neck.

"Oh, well," and, feigning disappointment, she dropped the chain back into its sandalwood box. "You have forgotten your tea and it has become quite cold. Come, I will pour you another cup."

They turned the conversation to other things. Did he intend to work on his book while he was up here or merely rest? Then she would probably see a lot of him, and he had better get a canoe. The moon would be full before very long.

He asked about Tommy Vanderhof and Antoinette Leeds. Yes, they were together a great deal. Was Phileep sure that they had ever been in love with each other? They seemed so friendly—although she had caught Tommy looking back after Miss Leeds once or twice when he hadn't known anybody was watching him.

The sun was now low in the horizon, strewing the water of the cove with its farewell largess of gold. The air felt the chill of its going, and La Zingara

gave a little shudder.

"Let us go in the house."
Locke held the door for her.

"And Prince Petrovitch?" he asked.
"Is he still as attentive to her as ever?"

"Always. When he is not being talked business to by old Mr. Leeds, he is talking pleasure to young Miss Leeds. When she is present, he has eyes for no one else—vairy especially not for me." She was standing by the table, idly toying with a wicked-looking dagger paper cutter. Then, with apparent irrelevance, half to herself: "He has a wonderful old sapphire seal ring. Have you noticed it?"

She looked up and, noting Locke's expression, quickly glided over to him.

"Ah, Phileep," placing her hands caressingly upon his shoulders, "I have displeased you again! I did not think. Kees me. You forgive? And now, dear, you must go."

### CHAPTER VI.

An hour before noon, on the porch of the Beach Club, a little group were informally discussing plans for the dance to be held the following Saturday night. Dickie Bankhart would look after the music—the same "coons" they had had last time—and Antoinette Leeds had promised to see to the decorations. Major Coyden, his florid face set off by immaculate white flannels, offered to help.

"If the room were only the least bit larger!" wished Miss Leeds, looking in

through the open door.

"Too bad it's heated by steam," said Tommy Vanderhof, the fourth of the group. "A friend of mine once gave a dance in a tiny little house of his over in Newark. It was summertime and he saved space by making the orchestra sit in the furnace and play continuously. Whenever you wanted more music you simply opened the registers. But you can only do that with hot air, of course."

"I should say so!" grunted the major disgustedly.

Antoinette had an inspiration.

"Wouldn't it be perfectly wonderful," she suggested, "if we could get La Zingara to dance for us just before supper? Do you think she'd do it? Don't you suppose Mr. Locke could persuade her? He'll probably be along for swimming soon. Let's ask him."

Major Coyden cleared his throat and straightened his tie a bit.

"Why, I'd be very glad to ask her myself. I feel certain—ah—she'd do quite as much for me. But—er—are you sure——"

"Doubt if 'twould do any good, anyhow," said Tommy, from his perch on the porch railing. "She's up here for a complete rest, and I don't think you could persuade her to set toe to music if you brought her the head of St. Vitus upon an Arabian charger."

"I have it!" Antoinette suddenly decided. "I'll go ask her myself. My car's out back and I'll only be a minute. You wait here, Tommy," as he started to follow her down the porch.

"Did you see that article about La Zingara in one of the Sunday papers a couple of weeks ago?" put in Dickie Bankhart. "I wonder if she really is an Aztec princess!"

"Pure press-agent dope," Tommy assured him, resuming his perch on the rail, "She's East Indian. Her father was a British officer, and her mother was a dancing girl in one of the tem-

ples. That's where she inherits her wonderful dancing."

Major Coyden had been listening to them with the amused air of the man who really knows,

"As a matter of fact," he told them with a superior smile, "I happen to be acquainted with the lady's true history. I have it from the one person who should know it best. It was not told to me in confidence and-well, it makes an interesting story. The lady in question was the daughter of a Russian revolutionist of noble birth and a beautiful Hungarian singer. The father was murdered at the instigatiton of the Black Hundred, and the mother and daughter barely escaped and fled the country, over the snow-clad Carpathians, into Hungary. Heartbroken, and ill from exposure and the terrible hardships of the journey, the mother did not long survive." The major, overcome by the pathos of his own voice, paused a moment.

"The little daughter," he continued, "now alone in the world, was adopted and brought up by a kindly old Hungarian peasant couple who had no children of their own. All went well until one day she was noticed by the great noble of that part of the country. His name, for reasons that are obvious

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"Very," muttered Tommy.

"—I will not reveal. Fascinated by her beauty, it was on his part a case of love at first sight. His whirlwind wooing swept her off her feet, and when it was finally shown that her birth, at least upon her father's side, was equal to his own, the emperor was persuaded to sanction the marriage. For a while, they were very happy. But when the first fierce fire of the count's passion had burned itself out, things changed. He was a powerful man politically, ever thirsting for more power, and he made everything subservient to his ambition. He did not hesitate to use even his

wife to further his ends. Well, to make a long story short—"

"Too late," murmured Tommy.

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"One of the foreign ambassadors possessed certain secrets of state essential to his plans. This diplomat had already shown unwelcome attentions to the countess and had been indignantly repulsed. Her husband, who had been insanely jealous of the man at first, now deliberately urged his wife to lure him on-to stop at nothing. She indignantly refused. Blind with rage, he actually beat her. That night, bruised and hysterical, she fled from the palace and sought refuge with a band of gypsies encamped near by. She had been kind to them when they had danced and played at the castle, and they gladly took her in without question. She was naturally dark in coloring, and for two years she passed as one of them. It was they who taught her to dance, and that is why to-day she takes the name of La Zingara-the gypsy. It sounds almost like a fairy tale, doesn't it?"

"Very," agreed Tommy heartily.

There was the noise of motors in the driveway back of the clubhouse—coming up, reversing, and parking—like the buzzing of gigantic flies on fly paper before they finally cease struggling and lapse into silence.

Antoinette Leeds came out onto the

porch radiant with triumph.

"She's promised to come," she announced, "and I think we can persuade her to dance for us. And, Tommy, I don't blame you or Mr. Locke or any one a bit. She's fascinating. She—"

Tony turned to see who was coming down the veranda. Mrs. Leeds, hot looking in cool-looking clothes, was with dignity guiding her body toward them, accompanied by the prince. The latter, resplendent in a bright blue grass-cloth suit, buff silk shirt, chamois gloves, and a malacca cane, was beaming and twinkling at the world in general.

"I fear," he told Antoinette with an exaggerated bow; "that the humble worm is too late for the early bird." Then, including them all: "Are we going bathing this morning?"

They all were, with the exception of Mrs. Leeds and Major Coyden, who gallantly elected to "sit it out" with

her.

"If you ask me," Tommy confided to Tony on their way to the bathhouses, "I think the old boy feels that a bathing suit might place his figure in a false

position."

Tommy and Prince Petrovitch were the first out on the pier. Tommy was waiting for Tony. Of late they had been taking long swims together to one or another of the rocky little islands and points that pierce the Sound. The prince, however, was not at all accomplished in the water, and preferred to perform the trying ordeal of getting into it with as small a gallery as possible. He descended the steps by the diving board and gingerly thrust forth an inquiring foot.

"Br-r-rrr!" drawing up his fat white

shoulders with the cold.

He tried the other foot. Then he managed to get both feet on the step below the surface. Finally, after five full minutes of painful maneuvering, he turned his back toward the water, squatted down, and with a superhuman effort actually pushed himself, kicking and splatttering, off into the water.

Antoinette, lithe in a trim black bathing suit, her golden hair bound tight in a bright blue kerchief, waved to Tommy as she came down the pier:

"How is it?" she called to the prince, who, beaming with triumph, was now standing in water up to his chest.

"Eet is glorious-once you are in,"

he assured her.

Then, just to show what he really could do, he extended his arms, closed his eyes, and sank slowly over on to his back.

"It floats!" said Tommy with awe. "Well, here goes."

With which Tony walked out to the end of the springboard, raised her arms, and dove. Tommy followed with a little run, took a high spring, turned over once in the air—a little too far—and hit the water a trifle flat.

"Ugh!" he grunted. "Diving on an empty tummy again!"

When they had swum out some distance, a rock came into view around the point to the right of them.

"How about that one?" suggested Tommy. "We haven't tried that one yet."

Tony assented by changing her course slightly. Fifteen minutes later he was helping her over the barnacle-covered stones.

"Oh, my breath!" she panted, curling up on a smooth and comparatively comfortable slab of rock near the top.

Tommy, shading his eyes, peered off in all directions. Behind them was a wooded shore; in front, the open Sound.

"Ha!" he exclaimed melodramatically, pointing out toward a threemasted schooner beyond the lighthouse. "Our hero sights a sail! But just as he is about to run his last-er-white garment up on the flagpole he has improvised on the beach, the full import of what rescue would mean dawns upon him. Back in civilization, she would again be Gwendolyn de Foisgras, the pampered heiress of the mighty Patrick de Foisgras, while he-he would once more be plain John Scroggs, the humble hole blower in her father's Swiss cheese factory. Here on their desert island they were man and woman. In the forty days since he had rescued her from that awful shipwreck, he had grown to love here severely-er-that is, passionately."

Although Tommy's oratory had been addressed to the world at large, at the mention of love, he clearly indicated Tony with a sweeping gesture of the arm.

"Don't be silly, Tommy," she told him.

"It's the only way I can keep from not being," he said, facing her.

She seemed absorbed in picking snails from the rock and tossing them into the water.

"You know I love you, Tony."
He moved over beside her and took her hand.

"Don't, Tommy. You promised."
"I had no business to promise."

"I—I—hate you!" snatching away her hand.

"Good. That's better than this friendship stuff. Hate is just love with a headache, and a headache can't last forever. You love me, Tony. Do you hear? You love me."

"Tommy, don't—don't—I mustn't.
You don't understand."

"You mean because—there's some one else?" He released her hand and drew back a little.

"No— Oh, I wish I knew! I don't know! I——" She sighed with helplessness.

"Never mind, dear," he said gently, resting his hand on hers again. "I shouldn't have asked. It's just that I love you so much—I want you so, Tony—that I don't want you to think you love somebody else just because you think you don't love me. Come." He stood up and held out his hands to help her. "Now that I've succeeded in making you thoroughly unhappy, I think we'd better be getting back."

"You haven't made me unhappy," she said, picking her way out over the stones into deep water.

Tommy followed a few yards behind her. When she was waist deep, she turned.

"And, Tommy."

"Yes, Tony?"

"I think-my headache is a lot better now." "Your headache?"

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And then, as she shot out into the water, his own definition of "hate" dawned upon him. He scrambled into the water after her.

Swish—swish—swish, she cut through the surface. Klop—klop—klop—klop—klop came Tommy, overhand, in desperate pursuit. Her protests were smothered by his kiss. The kiss was finally broken by their sinking beneath the surface. When they arose, he released her. His madness had been washed away by the cool water, and he permitted her to swim unmolested. He was too filled with exultation to tell her that he was sorry. They swam back in silence.

By the time they reached the Beach Club, the water was crowded with bathers, laughing, splashing, ducking one another, and indulging in the usual forms of physical repartee.

Prince Petrovitch was in a little group on the end of the pier, sunning himself. Philip Locke, dressed and dry, was lighting a cigarette for him.

As Tony came up the steps ahead of Tommy, the prince greeted her:

"Is it not wonderful?"

"It certainly is. I wish you had been with us," she added for Tommy's benefit.

"And you had promised to teach me that—how is it you say?—creep stroke?" he protested accusingly. "I stayed in and stayed in, waiting for you. See," holding out his hands, "my nails are all blue."

"Poor dear!" sympathized Tony.
"Why, where is your seal ring—the one
you never take off?"

His show of alarm, it seemed to Locke, came almost too soon, even before he had looked to discover the ring's absence.

"Where— It is gone! I must have lost it in the water. I had it. I was not far from the steps." He was the picture of despair, almost the caricature of it, thought Locke. "I must

notify Walter. Perhaps at low tide he can find it. I will offer a reward." He strode down the pier to find the bathing master.

Locke gazed after him with a puzzled expression. He was troubled. He remembered La Zingara—her chain of signets, her half-jesting, half-threatening reference to this particular signet. The prince had ignored her in public. She would seek revenge. The tiger cat in her had been aroused. She—Locke tried to shake the ugly suspicion out of his head. His thoughts were those of a jealous fool, he told himself. And how could he be jealous unless he were in love? And how could he, Philip Locke, be in love with La Zingara?

Nevertheless, when he was walking back to the inn a little later, he could not keep from speculating upon the several occasions in the last few days when he had telephoned her only to be told that she was, oh, so tired, and would he mind very much if she would rather that he did not come over until to-morrow? Oh, well, he decided, if it really made as much difference as all that to him, the best thing he could do would be to find out.

He probably wouldn't see her at the club that afternoon. Somehow one did not expect to find La Zingara in the fierce glare of the bright sunlight. Like will-o'-the-wisps, phosphorescence, moonlight, wonderful dreams, and the eyes of cats, one instinctively associated her with the night. He would call on her that evening.

An hour or so after dinner, Locke walked over to see La Zingara and set his doubts at rest. The night air was as soft and velvety as yielding lips. Early arrivals in the insect world were here and there tuning up their instruments for the great annual August symphony. The moon, big and pink, was being drawn by the fascination of it

all up out of its hiding place across the Sound. As the winding road brought him close to La Zingara's villa, he could see the cove through the weird arabesques of the trees, black and still, like the waters of some enchanted pool.

That dark splotch on the tip of the rock below the house-one could almost think it was some nocturnal goddess, ready to dive into--- He stopped short. The dark splotch seemed to sway. And yet there was no breeze. Then, as he stood staring, the blurred edges of the mass seemed to melt away and flow to the ground, leaving-Locke caught his breath-leaving the graceful, curving outlines of a beautifully formed woman silhouetted against the growing moonlight beyond. She raised her arms above her head, paused an instant, and then left the rock in a perfect arch, vanishing through the polished surface of the water.

Locke rubbed his eyes. When he looked again, she was swimming with long, gliding strokes out in the center of the cove. He hesitated a moment, and then went on up the winding road to the house.

Xenia opened the door for him.

"M'dame has jes' gawn in swimmin'," she told him doubtfully. "But y'cain't go on down 'cause——"

"That's all right," Locke assured her, strolling into the big living room. "I'll

wait here."

He slouched back into a deep easychair and began to gaze about him. He could hear Xenia stumbling down over the rocks to tell her mistress of his arrival. He wondered—

He was startled by a heavy pounce upon his shoulders. Isis, the Angora, purring as if she had just swallowed an aëroplane, was rubbing her head affectionately against his cheek.

"Hello!" he said, holding her at arms' length out in front of him. "You two

are alike, you know."

Just then the French window opened.

"Hello, Phileep!" said La Zingara, shyly holding her yellow bath robe close about her. Her hair was bound tight with a yellow silk kerchief. Her feet, still glistening from the water, were protected only by sandals. "You must wait until Xenia dries me and I can get something on. I will be only a minute. Br-r-r! It is cold!"

She ran through the room with quick little steps and hurried up the stairs.

When she appeared again, it was in a clinging flame-colored negligee. A blood-red flower accentuated the blackness of her hair. The nymph of the enchanted pool had again become the graceful, insinuating tigress.

"You did not tell me you were coming, Phileep," she said, settling herself back among the cushions on the davenport. She glanced at the mantel clock, a trifle anxiously, he thought,

"I wanted to see you," he said. "And I never see you anywhere now. You never come to the club or the tennis courts any more. And so—— Don't you like it here? Are you sorry you came to Nekewood?"

She seemed to be considering the

question.

"I-I do not know, Phileep. When I was in the city, I always thought that I envied people who leave the entertainment when it is over, while we who make the entertainment have to stay on because we are part of it. We can never-go home-when we are bored. I thought I would like to visit your world-the world of Tommy Vanderhof and Miss Leeds and all the rest of them-just as they visit my world. But I find that I cannot. I thought it was merely going to a place, but it is something else. When I come here, I find that-I am not here. Do you understand a little of what I mean?"

He closed his hand sympathetically

over hers and nodded. .

"It is like swimming in the moonlight," she went on. "There is the beautiful silver path on the water just ahead of you. But when you try to swim into it, it is not there. It is always just beyond." She sighed. Then, reminded of the swim she had just come from: "The water was wonderful tonight."

"I was down at the beach this morning, and everybody said it was wonderful then." He remembered why he had come and straightened up. "The prince

lost his ring."

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Zingara gazed at him speculatively

through half-closed eyes.

"Is the prince still as attentive as ever to Miss Leeds?" she wondered, without any apparent interest.

"He is as attentive as ever to her, but she— Well, I may be wrong, but it looks to me-as if she were beginning to find that your friend Tommy Vanderhof stands the sunlight a bit better. They're off on long swims together almost every day."

"But her father and her mother? Do

not they still disapprove?"

"Mrs. Leeds doesn't like it, and she seems to have redoubled her graciousness to Petrovitch in order to blind him to daughter's defection. But Leeds, père, I think, is beginning to wonder if foreign noblemen make the best husbands for American girls, after all. You see, it turns out that most of those Russian contracts are going to Japan, and besides, he is beginning to suspect that Petrovitch is not quite as close to the new government as he had led him to suppose."

"You mean that they would sell their own daughter?" said Zingara, incredulous. "Yet they would shrink with loathing from any woman who would sell herself!" She seemed to be musing upon this strange paradox. Then, without apparent relevance: "Did the prince say where he had lost his ring?"

Locke questioned her eyes with his.

"He said that he must have lost it in bathing."

She sighed with mock regret.

"It was just what I needed to fill out

my chain!"

"Don't!" His sharpness frightened her. Then his tone changed to one of pleading. "Take my ring—if you must have one." He slipped the dignified bloodstone from his finger and held it out to her. "You've never asked me for it, and if you had, I wouldn't have given it to you—until now. But take it. I love you. I——"

"No, Phileep! No"—pushing him from her. She was breathing quickly. The embers back of her eyes were glowing brightly. "I could not take your ring—with all it stands for. It is your honor, your traditions, your standards. When you are wearing it, it is the most wonderful and precious ring in all the world. But were I to take it from you, it would be valueless. You say you love me? I care too much for you to love you—for that would spoil it all.

"Before I met you, Phileep, I thought all men were alike. To me there was only one man in all the world. He may have had millions of different bodies and faces, but he was always the same -always bad, always a beast, always selfish, even when he was generous; always cruel, even when he was kind. If I went from one to another of them sometimes, that was not what you call being untrue. It was the same man, only in a different body-just as if he had changed his clothes or the way in which he wore his hair. And then I met you. But it was too late, Phileep. You understand-a little?

"Ah, Phileep, Phileep!" Her eyes were glistening. A tear shone on her cheek, and as she turned her head away from him, she stifled a sob. "And now you must go," she told him finally, getting up and holding out her hand with a wistful smile. He took it, hesitated a moment as if in doubt, and then started

away.

"Wait," she called softly. He turned.

She was holding out her arms to him. "Kees me." He crushed her to him and pressed his lips to hers. "Again," she whispered. Suddenly she pushed him from her. "And now go—for God's sake, go!"

### CHAPTER VII.

It was Saturday night, and the dance at the Beach Club was in full syncopation. The crowded room, with its neurotic jerking and twitching of sound, color, and motion, contrasted sharply with the lazy calm of the water, with its vast star-sprinkled canopy, and the languor of the soft summer air. On the porch little groups of knitting chaperons gossiped with odd males, while here and there, out on the pier and down along the beach, stray couples sought relief from the heat of the dance.

One couple, at the very end of the pier, had been standing by the railing for some time. At last the man made a pleading gesture. The girl shook her head and turned toward the clubhouse. The man shrugged slightly and followed. It was Prince Petrovitch and Tony Leeds.

At the door of the club, Tommy Vanderhof spied them.

"Hello, Tony!" he greeted her. "I've been looking for you everywhere. This was my dance, you know." He turned to the prince, who surrendered her with a motion of resignation.

"This wasn't our dance," protested Tony when the prince had gone on into the club.

"Yes, it was," Tommy insisted.
"You didn't know it, because I didn't have time to tell you, but—— Hang it!" as the music stopped. "Oh, well, let's walk it out. I've something very important I want to say to you. Do you mind?"

"Not yet," said Tony as they started toward the beach.

Prince Petrovitch stood in the door-

way, scanning the room for Mr. and Mrs. Leeds. They were sitting in the opposite corner by a window opening onto the veranda. Mrs. Leeds noticed, as the prince made his way across the floor, that his usually beaming face was gloomy, and that Tony was not with him. She had a dreadful foreboding.

"Ah, mon prince," greeted Mr. Leeds, rising ponderously and drawing up a

The prince bowed, but without his customary smile.

"I have had very sudden news," he told them gravely. "I do not know what you will think of me—of this suddenness—but it is imperative that I should be in town the first thing to-morrow morning. A cable." He made a perfunctory motion toward his pocket. "It is imperative."

While Mr. Leeds was protesting his surprise and regret, his wife was rapidly putting two and two together in her mind.

"Where is Tony?" she asked.

"I believe she had the next dance with Mr. Vanderhof," said the prince, looking about the room. "I left her with him."

Leeds" brow furrowed. He remembered now that his wife had told him that Antoinette was to let the prince have his answer that evening. They had been together. The prince had evidently received some grave disappointment. Antoinette was now with young Vanderhof. Leeds scowled. Of course, now that the Russian revolution had destroyed the prince's influence with his government, he had no business interest in his daughter's choice. But this marriage with nobility was very close to his wife's heart, and with regard to her wishes, Leeds, like most American husbands, was an extreme pacifist.

"Would it be inconvenient," the prince was saying, "if your chauffeur is still outside, to have him run me back to the house? My packing-the early start---"

"Certainly-of course," said Leeds, getting up. "The breaking off of your visit to us-I was thinking of our misfortune. Come. I will call James at once."

The prince made his adieus over Mrs. Leeds' hand and followed Leeds across the floor.

On the way out, they met La Zingara and Philip Locke just arriving. As they passed, Zingara flashed a quick plance at Petrovitch that might have meant, "So you scorn me, do you? Then beware!" By the answering light in the prince's eyes, Locke felt that he had mistaken her glance for one of secret understanding.

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In the doorway, Locke and Zingara paused. The musicians were ragging out a one-step that urged the scuffling, twisting mass of dancers into circulation. They sought the veranda. At the far end, they found two chairs in a comparatively secluded corner. As she seated herself, facing the water, Zingara noted that just inside the window back of her sat Mrs. Leeds; also that Mrs. Leeds had noticed Philip and herself. Philip offered her a cigarette. She shook her head.

"So you are not going to dance for them to-night after all," Philip said when there came a lull in the music.

"No. When Miss Leeds first asked me, I half promised that I would." A dexterous rearranging of her scarf enabled her to assure herself that Mrs. Leeds, on the other side of the open window, could hear distinctly. "I really wanted to. But when I thought of the prince-Prince Petrovitch-I could not. I could not bear-" She broke off with a deep sigh.

"Prince Petrovitch?" wondered Locke. "And what on earth has he

got to do with it?"

Without apparently seeing, Zingara knew that Mr. Leeds had returned to his wife's side and had been cautioned by that lady into attentive silence.

"Prince Petrovitch," Zingara said sadly, "has everything to do with it." Then, after an impressive pause: "I have never told you, Phileep, and you have been too good a friend to ask. But you have the right to know, and I shall tell you now."

Philip was about to protest, when a slight gesture from Zingara drew his attention to the Leeds. What was she up to now? Oh, well! With a shrug, he resigned himself to this latest of her

life stories.

"My parents were of the Polish nobility, and when I was little more than a child it was arranged that I should marry a youth of equal rank. He was a nice boy, and in my ignorance of love, I offered no objection to their plans. The prospect of a great wedding flattered my girlish vanity. A great ball was given in honor of the betrothal. The brilliant scene, the dazzling gowns uniforms, the soft throbbing waltzes-I can feel it all again noweven here," with a contemptuous nod toward the crowded little room behind "All the notables of the Polish nobility were there, and the Russian governor. The Russian governor has always brought woe and suffering to my unhappy people. This time he brought-his nephew."

She paused, apparently overcome with emotion; perhaps to wait for the music to die down again so that Mr. and Mrs. Leeds might miss nothing.

"You would not know him now," went on in dreamy reminiscence. "You see only the pudgy form, the flaccid face -the husks of satiated desire. I still can see the slender, graceful youth-the boy that was-with the world before him."

"Petrovitch?" suggested Locke.

"Petrovitch. We danced once. I became suddenly alive. The wine of womanhood was pulsing through my veins. We danced again. And again. My mother remonstrated. It only fired me to greater madness."

"And then?"

"You will not understand, Phileep. The Creator made you Anglo-Saxons and put hearts in you. With us He made the hearts, and then covered them with bodies as an afterthought. night we eloped. We were married by a filthy peasant priest that we found in the course of our wild flight to Peters-

"For almost a year, the sun shone for me even when the sky was gray, and flowers bloomed for me beneath the winter snows. Love gilded life for me.

Ah, it was glorious!

"But at last there came a change, gradual at first, like a creeping shadow. The prince was growing tired of his pretty plaything. He sought new toys, until finally his vagrant fancy fell upon a blazing jewel-a dancer of the imperial ballet. I could no longer deceive myself. For a time I moped and mourned. And then I saw that this only made matters worse. With sudden resolution, I set out to beat my rival at her own game. I danced and danced until I surpassed even her. Disguised, I finally won a place in the ballet. I set out to fascinate my own hus-When he came to see her, I danced only to him, and drew him to me like a needle to a magnet. But when he discovered who I was, he flew into a rage and struck me, vowing never to lay eyes again upon the creature who had so defiled his name.

"Since then I have followed him here, there, all the world over, hoping that some day his heart might soften toward me. But it is always the same. With him it is as if I were not." The words caught with a half sob. "I cannot help

it. I-love him-still."

"But if you are married to him?" She shook her head.

"He would only deny it. I do not

even know the name of the little village And even if I could ever find that peasant priest-he would only hate me the more." Then, in a voice vibrating with suppressed emotion, "Would you mind, Phileep, very much, if I asked you to take me home? I am sorry. I should not have forgotten-to forget"

Inside the window Leeds, jaw set and hands gripping and ungripping, glowered at his wife. Mrs. Leeds was dazed. As if summing up her thoughts.

she finally said:

"Oh, well, he's going in the morning There needn't be any scandal, thank goodness!"

That night before going to bed, Antoinette Leeds went to her parents'

"Mother," she said, "I have some thing to tell you and daddy. I am afraid you won't like it." She hesi-

"Yes, Tony?" encouraged her father. "I'm engaged"—his jaw fell, the gasped-"I'm engaged to mother Tommy Vanderhof," she finished defiantly.

Their faces instantly lighted.

"My dear little girl!" said Leeds, patting her paternally upon the shoulder. "I knew we could trust our daughter's judgment."

Her mother kissed her, the tears roll-

ing down her cheeks.

"I'm so glad," she said thankfully, "so glad for my little girl! I was so afraid --- And if we felt it our duty to test you, to make sure that you knew your own mind, it was only to insure your happiness. Tommy's a dear boy."

When Philip Locke awoke next day, it was almost noon. The bright sunlight and the crisp air made him regret a little some of the things he had said to Zingara the night before when taking her from the dance. He dressed and went downstairs. Tommy Vanderhof was waiting for him on the inn veranda to tell him his glorious news. Philip grasped his hand and congratulated him warmly.

"And it was all due to you," Tommy told him gratefully. "You yanked me back to my senses that day at the club."

"Does the prince know? How does

he take it?"

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"Oh, he beat it back to town on the first train this morning. And funny thing, Locke, Mrs. Leeds and the old gentleman seem tickled to death about it. It turns out that they were perfectly nutty about me all the time, and just kept from showing it on a bet or something."

The inn clerk, seeing Locke from the office, came out with a letter for him.

"Madame Zingara's maid brought it just a few minutes ago," he explained.

Locke excused himself to Tommy and tore open the envelope. He read:

PHILIPPE DEAR: Before you receive this, I shall have left Nekewood for good. A telephone call a few minutes ago decided me. For some time, as you know, I have wanted a certain gem to add to my chain. I have had this gem for several days upon approval, and I have finally decided to take it. It is for that that I have gone into town.

You will be angry at first, Philippe. But after a while, perhaps, you will realize that I love you too much to let you love me.

Yours, more than you will believe,

He crumpled the note and made as if to throw it away. Then he thought better of it and put it into his pocket.

"Speaking of La Zingara," said Tommy, reminded of something Tony had heard from Mrs. Leeds that morning, "do you suppose there's any truth in the yarn that she and Prince Petrovitch are married?"

Locke gazed out over the Sound.

"I don't know of any reason why they shouldn't be," he replied absently.



## YOU FOR THE HIGHWAYS

OH, you for the highways, if you wish and will it, Where the great wheels rumble and the toilers throng; But I am for the byways beside the bubbly rillet, Where there's low leaf laughter and the lilt of song!

Oh, you for the wide ways, if o'er them you would journey
And join the ceaseless striving, with its jostle and its jars;
But I am for the side ways where all the paths are ferny,
And the quiet sun goes homing to the trysting stars!

Oh, you for the great ways, if haply such your choice is,
Where the tongues of traffic thunder with a roar that's deep;
But I am for the gateways that lead to lulling voices,
And the vasts of silence, and the depths of sleep!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



# Little Old Eliza

### By Walter Prichard Eaton

Author of "Holding the Mirror Up to Arts 'The Man Who Found Christmas," etc.

OM and Lucy Robinson lived in a small "Elizabethan" house, set in a quarter acre of ground, in Portham Manor, and Tom went to town every day on the seven-fifty-eight and tried to get back on the five-twenty-one. Sometimes he missed it and had to take the five-forty-seven, which stopped nearly everywhere.

Tom and Lucy did not differ essentially from some two thousand other men and women who lived in Portham Manor, in "Elizabethan" or "colonial" or "bungalow" houses, set in one-fourth acre of grounds-or less, the men taking the seven-fifty-eight train in the morning and trying to catch the fivetwenty-one at night. Of course some of the men didn't have to go in till the eight-twenty-nine, but it was to be noted that these men seldom caught the early train out. If you are so important that you don't reach your office till ninethirty, you are generally too important to get away at five in the afternoon.

The Lucys of Portham Manor spent the day, in their husbands' absence, in various domestic pursuits connected with the care of infants, the supervision of meals, and so on, and in the more general pursuit of entertainment and culture. Bridge contributed largely to the former, and the Thursday Morning Club, which met Wednesday after-

noons, to the latter.

The Wednesday afternoons of the Thursday Morning Club were truly notable occasions. If you were anybody at all, you were there. The very best speakers came cheerfully to Portham Manor, and in the course of a winter, the good ladies learned all about the

drama, current events, Greek sculpture, the buried cities of the Incas, the novels of John Galsworthy, how to feed infants, city planning, pragmatism, vocational education, vers libre, kitches efficiency, and the life of Charles Dar-After each lecture, they asked many questions and then consumed to But there was always a general exodus before it was quite time for the fivetwenty-one from town to arrive.

Tom and Lucy Robinson had not always lived in Portham Manor. Nobody had, for that matter. Not long ago, it had been a forest of oak and chestnut, till some real-estate operator waved his magic wand. They had come from afar to the great city to make their fortunes, had met and married, and had tried life in a Harlem flat But being domestic by nature, and both having been born in a house with an upstairs to it and a back yard, they couldn't endure the flat. So they had made the first payment on their "Elizbethan" house in Portham and transferred their scanty furniture on a val from the city. Tom had become a commuter, and Lucy had joined the Thursday Morning Club and had begun to make curtains and save money for rugs.

She wanted what she called "real" Mrs. Brown, rugs, meaning Persian. next door, had nothing else downstairs in her house. But there were the payments on the property to make, and presently a nurse and a doctor to settle with, and another mouth to feed After the arrival of Thomas, junior, the Robinsons employed a maid and Lucy gained fifteen pounds, which however, became her. Thomas, junior,

was three years old before the house was paid for, and the family still trod on domestic rugs. Lucy didn't call them "unreal" rugs. In fact, she didn't call them anything. She hated to speak of them at all, but when it was necessary, she addressed them in a distant manner as "those."

"Ellen, sweep those to-day," or, "Oh, Tom, those are getting frightfully

shabby !"

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When she made this latter remark, Tom knew that Mrs. Brown had been

giving a whist party.

It was at about this time that the Robinsons decided to buy a car. It had got to the point where everybody who was anybody in Portham Manor had a car. Other women took their husbands to the train in the morning-sometimes -and met them at night. And then, on Saturday afternoon, Tom could get out to the new golf club, and on Sunday they could get far, far out into the country, and carry some lunch, and give Tom, junior, some real fresh air, better, even, than the excellent air of Portham, and maybe he could wade in a brook, the way his father used to do when he was a little boy.

"But if we get a car, I shall have to borrow some money, and we can't have those real rugs," he said, with a shade

of doubt.

"I don't care," Lucy bravely affirmed.
"You have to give up something for everything in this world, and it's simply essential that you get out to the golf club Saturdays, dear. You're working too hard. And it won't cost much, really, because it'll save depot carriage hire on bad nights, for I'll learn to drive it right away, and Mrs. Buxton says their little 'tin Lizzie' doesn't cost anything to run, and I'm perfectly willing to have that kind—well, to start with, anyhow. It's cheap, and we don't care what it looks like, do we, dear, if it will go?"

She paused for breath, and Tom said:

"N-no; I suppose we don't. It is cheap. I could buy one of those with that money in the savings bank."

"Oh, that's little Tom's college edu-

cation!"

"Well, it's either take that or borrow. I don't see that it makes much difference."

"Couldn't you get a secondhand car?"
"A secondhand Lizzie!" cried Tom.

"That would be a joke!"

"Yes, I know," said Lucy. "But I— I can't bear to see little Tom's collegeeducation fund——"

"Oh, I don't mind, if you don't," Tom laughed, and kissed her good-by before dashing for the seven-fifty-eight.

He knew a man who knew a lot about motor cars, and in this man he confided,

as they rode in to town.

"Sure," said his friend, "I can get you a used Lizzie just as good as new. Know where there is one now, in fact. We'll stop off to-night at Rockdale and look it over."

This car was one of several turned in by a large store, which used new chassis each year, keeping its old bodies. It was apparently in excellent condition, and the dealer promised to put a brandnew touring body on it and have it ready the next Saturday, for a total cost of three hundred dollars. Having been a commercial car, it had red wheels.

"Take it," said Tom's friend. "I'll come with you Saturday and drive it home. You can have your first lesson."

Then Tom went home with the news, "Oh, goody, goody!" cried Lucy. "The red wheels will make it look quite different, too. Where is it going to live, though? We can't afford to keep it in a garage."

"The woodshed," said Tom. "I've

doped that all out."

"But where'll the wood live?"

"Behind the woodshed. I'll build a lean-to shelter for it. Besides, Lizzie won't take up all the room, and we'll just have to go without so many open fires. Wood's getting awfully high, anyhow."

Tom got up early the next few mornings and transferred enough wood out of the shed to make room for the car. On Friday he borrowed two hundred dollars, drew a check for another hundred, met his friend at the Grand Central, and in an hour was the owner of a motor car.

"Of course, you'll have to get some spare tires right away," said his friend, "and probably, if your wife's going to drive, you'll want a self-starter. Then you must register the car. That'll cost you five dollars. You ought to buy your own barrel for gas, and keep a five-gallon can of oil in your garage."

"Anything else?" Tom asked.

"Oh, a lot of things will turn up. You'll learn 'em for yourself."

The garage man spun the crank, the engine started, the friend did something with his feet and hands, and Lizzie moved out into the sunlight and up the road to Portham Manor.

Tom, like most Americans of his class, wasn't in the least baffled by machinery, and by the time they had taken the car around a twenty-mile loop, he was able to hold it on the road quite respectably, to stop, shift gears, reverse, and turn around. Of course, he stalled his engine on his first attempt to slow down in traffic, and that annoyed him excessively, but his friend told him he was "doing fine," and he finally brought the car to a stop in front of his own dwelling in a glow of enthusiasm, and tooted the horn loudly for his wife.

Lucy came rushing out, followed by Tom, junior, who fell down the front steps in his haste.

"Why, it's a new car!" Lucy cried.

"No," said Tom, "only a new body. Looks just like a new one, doesn't it? Some class to those red wheels, too, eh, what?" "Oh, wait till I get my hat and little Tom's sweater!" Lucy cried.

The obliging friend rode with them for another fifty miles, while Tom struggled with the art of driving. He also stayed with them while Tom tried to warp the car into the woodshed. He cut the corner off Lucy's pansy bed, took a splinter off the door jamb, and dented his off-front mud guard, but otherwise succeeded very well.

"I'll get it. I'll be driving all right in a week!" he exclaimed. "Say, it's some sport, isn't it?"

He and Lucy spent half an hour wiping every speck of dust from the shining new body and the red wheels, after the friend had departed. Then they named it.

"Of course, it can't be Lizzie," said Lucy. "All its cousins are Lizzies. Its name is Eliza."

"Little old Eliza," said Tom, patting the hood. "We hope you are going to be very happy in your new home."

That evening, while Lucy was making a cushion to put behind little Tom's back when he went touring, so that he'd fit better, big Tom burst into poetry.

"Here, listen to this," he suddenly announced, reading from the back of an envelope:

"Eliza Robinson, Portham's queen, Lives on oil and gasoline."

"There's one too many syllables in the first line," said Lucy critically.

Tom looked scornfully at her and went to work again.

"Well, how's this?" he asked presently:

"Old Eliza's just our style— Only costs a cent a mile."

"That's better," said Lucy. "I've thought of one:

"When Eliza goes to bed, She snuggles down inside the shed."

They both laughed.

"We ought to make a book about Eliza," said Tom.

"Do you know," Lucy added thoughtfully, "I'll bet we are having more fun with fittle old Eliza than if we had a brand-new Fierce-Sparrow?"

"She's the only car that could live in the woodshed, anyhow," said Tom. "There was just room to shut the door without shaving her tail light."

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It was three months at least before Eliza became a commonplace in the lives of Tom and Lucy. At first, to be sure, they were inclined to apologize for her. They told at some length how they thought it was better to learn to drive with a cheap car. They joked about her, to take the curse off, and even repeated their poems. But that grew tiresome after a while, especially as Tom's employer said to him one day:

"My dear Robinson, why apologize? I have one myself, and I never dream of using any of the big cars except for long runs. There's no more reason why a man shouldn't save money on his motor car than on his grocery bills."

For more than three months, they made Sunday trips far into the country, even up into New England. They saw places they had never seen before. On Saturday afternoons, they got to the golf club, and Tom achieved exercise. On weekdays, Lucy did her marketing herself, with excellent results. Ellen, the maid, went along as a nurse for Tom, junior, on many trips, which kept her supremely contented, as she "adored" motoring-and a contented maid in the house makes, as everybody knows, for health and happiness. On Tom's vacation, they got into Eliza, bag and baggage, and set out for the White Mountains, which they had never seen, boarding cheaply in a farmhouse and pushing the little car over any road that suited their fancy.

And Eliza behaved extremely well, even for one of her family. Tom, thanks to a natural knack for mechanics and common sense enough to leave things alone when they were going

right, kept the car well greased and oiled. He knew its principle and the price of parts, and stood over the mechanician when it had to go to a garage, to see that he was charged for what was really the matter-and no more. She averaged, on steady runs, twentyfive miles to the gallon, and since there were no housing bills to pay, Tom and Lucy rightly felt she wasn't an expensive luxury. The family were certainly all healthy and happy and mentally expanded by getting out around the country. Tom actually found that his work at the office seemed to go better on Monday mornings than it had used to do when he had spent the day with the Sunday paper, and, quite unexpectedly, he found himself promoted, with a corresponding raise in salary.

"And I believe," he said to Lucy that night, as she drove him home from the station, "little old Eliza is to blame. Know what I'm going to do? I'm going to get you a self-starter!"

Lucy did not reply immediately. "Don't you want a self-starter?" he asked.

"Y-yes, it would be a help, of course, though there's always a man around somewhere who'll crank for you—or one comes by if you just wait a minute, even out in the country. I—I was thinking, though, that if we should want to—to—to get another car, any time, what's the use of sinking money in a starter for Eliza?"

"Why, aren't you satisfied with Eliza? Poor old girl!"

"She—she isn't very pretty—her lines aren't," said Lucy, "are they? Mrs. Brown's going to get one of those magnetic gear-shift cars next year."

It was Tom's turn to be silent. He didn't admit it, but he had been looking at cars beside the station platforms all the way out from New York and admiring the long wheel bases, the bullet lines, the sense of quiet power, in many he had seen. After three months of

driving Eliza, now that it had become second nature, his hands and feet itched, he realized, for the control of a larger wheel, a smoother, deadlier engine; he longed to feel that he was master of ninety horse power and unlimited speed. But you, dear reader, if you have driven a car, don't need to be told how he felt.

He said nothing the rest of the way home, and neither he nor Lucy wiped the dust off poor Eliza as they left her in the woodshed. It was the first time they had ever neglected this rite. She had become a commonplace! The raise in salary had been, perhaps, only the final precipitant in the crystallization of their mood, but, however that may be, poor Eliza was now a back number. Such sad moments come in the life of an automobile.

The red-and-gold pageant of autumn was spread for Tom's and Lucy's eyes, but they did not see it. Instead, as a big, quiet car sneaked by them with that contemptuous preliminary toot the chauffeur deigns to give as warning to the driver of a Lizzie, Lucy would remark, "There goes a Calvin Eight!" or, "Look at that beautiful Fierce-Sparrow!" And Tom, twitching Eliza back on the crown of the macadam, would only grunt and watch the car disappearing up the highway, holding the road without a bounce at twice his speed.

His own most acute periods of envy were when he was walking up or down Fifth Avenue. Then, with every kind of a car lined up along the curb, he saw beautiful bodies and looked in at complicated, shining instrument dashes, and listened to quiet engines hardly making a sound or a shiver as they purred contentedly while waiting for their owners to come back to them. He developed the trick of recognizing every make from its hub cap or radiator, as he had used to know every bicycle when a boy. He talked learnedly with men who didn't know his make of car, and once,

to his subsequent shame, when a strager asked what car he drove, he replied, "a Supple Six." It wasn't so much that he had lied that troubled him. It was the fact that he, a seif-respecting American of moderate means, had fet ashamed of his position, and had thrown a cheap, false bluff. He was cross when he reached home, and spoke shortly and sharply when Lucy told him she had saved five dollars that week from the household money "for the new car fund."

"I should think you'd better start a new rug fund," he said, tripping over a curled-up corner of an old rug on his way to fill his pipe. He kicked the corner down viciously, watching it snap back into a roll. "Damned old thing!" he swore.

Lucy, who knew nothing of his earlier conversation, was amazed. Husbands have a way of expecting their wives to know how they feel, and why they feel that way, as they enter the front door, and are enraged when this magic intuition fails to work. That much Lucy knew, at any rate. So all she answered was:

"Have you decided not to get a new

car?"

"Little I'll decide, if you want it," said Tom.

"That's untrue and unkind," she retorted angrily, "and not a bit like you!"

This being entirely true, it made Tom still crosser; but he had sense of justice enough left to keep silent, filling his pipe and retiring into his evening paper.

However, the next day he saw a thrillingly beautiful, sport-lined new model of a medium-priced car on the Avenue, and he ate his lunch at Child's and smoked his pipe instead of a cigar, putting one dollar into a box in his desk, for his own motor fund.

They still used Eliza to get to the golf club and for other utilitarian purposes, but it seemed to be tacitly agreed

between them that their affection for her was over, and it was only at rare intervals that she got a cleaning. Fortunately, Tom had too much conscience about machinery to neglect the oil. But the Sunday excursions ceased. It was getting too cold for little Tom, they said. Ellen made no comment, but she showed no disposition to be a nurse to little Tom at home. On the contrary, she insisted on her Sunday afternoon off. Tom took Eliza to the golf club, while Lucy remained dully at home and cooked his supper when he got back. He generally went to sleep while she was washing the dishes, and the rest of the evening was a dull affair.

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At Christmas, each planned a surprise for the other. As usual, they hung up their stockings, and on Christmas morning each drew out a box. And in each box was a little stack of gold pieces, labeled, "For the new car."

They laughed a little; they kissed

each other; they counted the money.
"Mine represents cheap lunches and

a pipe," said Tom.

"And mine careful marketing and no matinées," said Lucy.

"Who says motors are not an economy?" Tom demanded.

Still, even as he said it, he thought of little Judson, in the office, who had also eaten at Child's and smoked a pipe and who had bought his wife a Whistler etching. Of course, the Judsons went in for that sort of thing, though. Mrs. Judson would rather have a Whistler etching than a Rolls-Royce. Just the same—

And Lucy, what was she thinking? He looked at her and saw a shadow on her brow, which she chased away with a wifely smile when she felt his eyes upon her. She was thinking of Mabel Thomas, three doors away, whose hushand had always wanted a sundial in the little back yard where he pottered and planted every Sunday, and who had taken Lucy with her only two weeks

before to pick one out at a gardenfurniture shop. It was going to be set up in the library, under a shawl, to surprise him. No doubt he was finding it that very moment.

There was an odd silence between Tom and Lucy as they put their presents away and turned, you would have said with relief, to the prospect of Tom, junior, crowing over a woolly lamb which, when embraced, said "Ba-a-a-a" quite plainly. Lucy never asked Mabel how the dial was received, nor did Tom speak to Judson about the Whistler. Somehow they both felt a secret guilt, a certain ignobleness, in their mutual desire.

It was always Tom's custom on January 1st to take an hour of the day to cast up the accounts of the year before, to see where he stood. He knew beforehand, to be sure, but this served as a sort of reminder and spur to resolutions. On this New Year's, he found nothing added since early summer to Tom's college-education The raise in salary, in the autumn, had evidently gone to pay the two hundreddollar debt incurred by Eliza, and into a somewhat more generous household fund, which had no doubt resulted in Lucy's "savings" for the new car. They had no additional servant, no new rugs, no new pictures, no new books, and the cost of living was rising stead-And now they were planning to get a new car, which would go only twelve miles to the gallon and would set them back forty dollars apiece for Besides, the woodshed wouldn't hold it. Tom had a sudden rush of sense to the head, and spent a bad half hour.

Then Lucy appeared. With true wifely instinct, her mind had been running in the same channel, for she began almost at once to talk about little Tom and to say dubiously:

"It's just occurred to me that we really ought to be saving more for little

Tom's education fund. I've been thinking it over, and I wonder if Eliza wouldn't really do next year? I—I don't really mind so much, do you?"

on't really mind so much, do you?"
"Yes, I do!" Tom replied brusquely.

He had fully made up his mind that Lucy wanted the new car above all things, and he wasn't going to have her not want it. Besides, there were at least fourteen years before Tom, junior, would be going to college—plenty of time to save!

"We'll attend to the fund, all right. Don't you worry," he said. "But you're going to have that car. Why, it'll bring me another raise. You'll see!"

Lucy evidently didn't quite see, but she thought she saw Tom's yearning for that new car. He had been somehow far off from her these past weeks. She had missed certain little secret attentions, certain little greetings at evening and good-night kisses. She wanted them back again—and perhaps she wanted the new car, too. So she smiled.

"Maybe so, dear," she said. "We'll have a look in at the Calvin Eight place

next week."

"Calvin Eight? Nothing doing," said Tom. "Not that gas eater! I've been looking over the whole field, and the Supple Six for us."

"Oh, no—not the Supple Six! You know the Joneses had all sorts of trouble with theirs, and I don't like its lines, and—"

"Jones don't know how to take care of a motor more'n a baby," Tom interrupted. "And its lines are fine. Lots of go and ginger to 'em."

"They're horrid, and I just won't have a Supple Six!" cried Lucy. "I just won't have the same car the Joneses have!"

"Oh, that's it! Well, if that isn't a woman all over! Can you beat it?"

Tom addressed this remark to the curled-up rug, upon which he again vented his feelings, but this time his foot caught a loose thread, and with a ripping sound he frayed the entire edge.

"We'll have a decent car, if we can't have a decent house to live in," he declared on the ruin.

Lucy was in tears now.

"Well, we can't have the house and the car, too!" she cried. "If you don't like my housekeeping, why don't you

But she didn't finish the sentence She stopped, horrified at what she had said. Tom, his face glum, walked out into the yard.

That night he said, with the abrupt roughness of a husband preparing to

yield a point:

"Oh, all right—we'll get a Calvin

Eight."

"We'll go to the show and look 'em all over," said Lucy, with a constrained, but conciliatory smile.

But that night she waited a long while for Tom to come to bed. Finally she went to sleep without his kiss. He

was downstairs, reading.

It seemed to Tom himself, or would have if he had been of the self-analyzing sort, that he had as many moods those days as a prima donna. For instance, he waited in town for Lucy and went to the big motor show in a mood of excited interest. And, fifteen minutes after he had arrived, he was vaguely conscious of a deep feeling of disgust. He could hardly have explained it to anybody at first. But these thousands of men and women thronging the aisles and crowding around the sportiest-looking cars depressed him. You couldn't get such a crowd to look at the greatest picture show or hear the grandest concert on earth, he thought. The further reflection that he hadn't been to a picture show or a concert for ten months didn't lessen his resentment! How many of these people already had cars, probably perfectly good cars, which they were scrapping just because the style in body lines had

changed a bit? What an awful waste it really represented, this using up of millions of pounds of steel when the old machinery was perfectly good, or ought to have been perfectly good if it had been honorably built.

"It's our American way of robbing the next generation to satisfy our own

present vanity," he thought.

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He felt so strongly on the subject by this time that he was about to speak to Lucy, when he noticed that her eyes were shining with excitement, that she was gazing on the bright new cars and pressing eagerly in through the thickest throngs to see some fancy model.

"I believe you'd like every flossy new car in the show," he said.

"Oh, I would!" she cried. "I'd like a great big garage just full of 'em, with soft cushions and closed bodies and holders for orchids and everything!"

"You're as bad as all the rest of this crazy, selfish crowd that's probably mortgaging its immortal soul to buy a luxury it don't need," Tom declared.

"Oh, most of 'em here are like me," Lucy laughed. "They'll never get these cars. They're just having fun envying those who can get 'em."

"So that's your idea of fun!"

"Yes, old crosspatch! You're not a woman, and you don't understand."

"Well, let's go look at the Calvin Eight. I can understand that."

"No," said Lucy. "We'll look at the Supple Six. You know you don't want a Calvin Eight, and it's to be your car, after all."

"My car? Isn't it just as much your car? You don't like a Supple Six. You'll use it more'n I shall. We'll go see the Calvin."

"No," said Lucy firmly.

"Yes," said Tom, still more firmly.

"I should think I might have something to say about it, considering how much I've saved out of the household money," she declared.

"Well, haven't I been without lunches

and cigars, and haven't I got to borrow a thousand dollars, at that?"

"Oh!" Lucy cried. "A whole thou-

sand?"
"Well, they don't give you Calvin

"Well, they don't give you Calvin Eights, do they?"

"No—but a thousand dollars! The Supple Six is cheaper. That decides me, Joneses or no Joneses."

"You're going to have the car you want!" said Tom. "I'm not a piker."

"But I want a Supple Six-now."

"No, you don't."

"Perhaps you know better than I do?"

"I think I do," said Tom.

"Well, we'll not decide now. We won't look at either of them. We'll go home and think it over."

As she marched toward the door, there was no reply to this but to follow. They were rather silent on the train, the sense of a quarrel between them, that sense which had been growing and growing for weeks. Tom stumbled over the torn rug when they got home, trying to find the light switch, and he swore. Lucy reproached him sharply, and went upstairs to see if little Tom was tucked in all right. When she returned, he was staring moodily around the room.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"These old rugs—these old pictures—these old books—it isn't much of a layout, this shack," he broke forth.

"Well, dear, you can't have everything. We'll get our pictures out on the country roads, our 'books in the running brooks,'" said Lucy, with elaborate sweetness—a shade too elaborate.

"Rats!" said Tom.

"Why have you suddenly begun to complain of the house?" Lucy broke in stormily. "I do my best, but I can't skimp and save to help you buy your new car and fix you up a palace, too. You want the car—"

"I want the car!" Tom cried. "Why,

I think the whole idea of scrapping a perfectly good piece of machinery just to get a more fashionable piece is utter, blithering nonsense! You mean you want the car!"

"I—I—I want little Tom to be a great artist!" cried Lucy, and with this wholly irrelevant and inexplicable speech, she suddenly left the room.

When Tom, bitter with self-reproaches, went upstairs, she was not in their chamber. He peered into little Tom's room, and she was wrapped in a puff on the couch near the crib.

There she remained all night.

The next day, which was Friday, Judson, at the office, quite unexpectedly asked Tom to bring Lucy out to his house Saturday afternoon, to spend the night. He liked Judson, and he couldn't well refuse. Lucy, to his surprise, consented with alacrity. Ellen, she said, could look after little Tom, and they could call up in the evening to see if everything was all right.

Judson lived over in Jersey, in a rather more distant suburb than Portham Manor. It was a considerable walk from the station, and the hilly country was sparsely settled beyond his modest dwelling. Behind his house he had two acres of ground, which he pointed out as they approached, and pointed out, too, his little girl playing

there with another child.

Mrs. Judson met them at the door. Like Judson, she was rather small, but trim and capable looking, with a bright smile of welcome. She ushered her guests into a room smaller than Tom's and Lucy's "Elizabethan" living room, but, they instantly knew, immeasurably its superior in every other respect. There were "real" rugs on the floor—which was not a waxed, shiny floor, but just oiled planks; over the plain mantel, against a wood panel, hung the Whistler etching; on the mantel were three small, but choice ornaments—an ivory samurai and two cloisonné vases.

On the plain gray-green walls elsewhere were many excellent pictures—not photographic reproductions, but engravings and a few bright Japanese prints. There were many books, too, in built-in shelves, and on the mahogany table, which held a Japanese lamp, were carefully laid, one overlapping another, a number of magazines. There was an upright piano, with music piled on top. The chairs were mahogany, and looked old.

"What a delightful room!" Lucy exclaimed.

Mrs. Judson smiled, and Judson

beamed proudly.

"We've picked everything up, one at a time," he said. "Began to look for a while as if the first things would be worn out before we got the last, but the raise Tom and I got last summer helped. It meant that Whistler. You saw that, didn't you, Tom?".

"Sure," said Tom, standing in front of the fire and looking up at the pictured bit of the old Thames side, which for the Judsons, he felt, somehow represented a whole world of imaginative

enjoyment.

The chamber Tom and Lucy were taken to had a pretty blue rag rug on the floor, old-fashioned blue chintz curtains, an old wooden double bed with a crazy quilt over it such as Tom hadn't seen since his boyhood, and on the walls three or four quaint steel engravings. The room had an atmosphere. It dated back to the 1840's. Tom looked at the old engravings; Lucy examined the rag rug and the curtains. Neither said much, however.

That afternoon the two couples took a long walk into the frozen country, through fields and woods, and returned at dusk to drink hot tea before the dancing fire, under the Whistler etching. After supper Tom expected bridge—that's what would have happened at Portham Manor—but nothing was said about cards. They sat around the fire

again, pleasantly tired, and talked. Now and then Judson would jump up to get a book or a magazine and read some snatch the conversation had suggested. It was mostly talk about the grave, absorbing problems pressing on the world to-day, or else a gay banter as the topic shifted. Not once were motor cars mentioned, till nearly ten o'clock. Then Judson chanced to say:

"I suppose some day, Tom, we'll get a little car like yours, when we can afford it. We've got the house more or less in order now. I'd have got one this year, but Jane wouldn't let me. She's got an idea—guess it's a right one, too—that the little girl ought to grow up in a house with the atmosphere of order and good books and nice pictures and all that sort of thing. Then she'll kind of absorb them, and be nice and good herself. Think there's anything in that?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried Lucy, so suddenly and intensely that Tom was startled. "I'm sure there is! We had a lecture at the Thursday Morning Club the other day by some expert, who said just that. He said an artist might grow up out of ugliness, but it was a handicap. He said if you taught a child Irving Berlin instead of Schubert, you were making Winter Garden audiences for the next generation."

"Still, I'd like the car," Judson laughed. "Only I can't manage 'em both. I don't see how you do it, Tom."

"I—I—" Tom broke off blankly.
"We really couldn't, before the raise," said Lucy. "But once you've got a little car, it lasts a long while and costs very little to run. It lives in our woodshed, you know."

She spoke decidedly. Tom rather admired her adroitness. Women were ever so much cleverer at deception than men!

There was no way that night for Lucy to avoid him, or for him to avoid her. Once in the little blue chamber with the old double bed and the steel engravings, they looked guiltily at each other, in silence.

"Lucy," said Tom, suddenly, "Judson's right—about the kids and pictures and all that, I mean."

"Of course he's right," said Lucy.
"Oh, I've known he was for a long time!"

"That was what you meant about little Tom's being an artist?"

She nodded her head, close to tears. "The little beggar!" said Tom softly. "The little beggar! But I thought you wanted a new car more than anything."

"And I thought you wanted it," said Lucy. "You—you—you've been so different to me lately."

Tom had a sudden gleam of insight. "Lucy," he declared, "we both wanted it, and we were unhappy because we really knew it wasn't a worthy wish. We both knew in our hearts it was just vain pride!"

"Yes," she said slowly. "That's it. Oh, Tom, their room downstairs is so pretty and—and cultured!"

"Don't use that word—somebody might think you spelled it with a K," he laughed. "I know just what you mean. I knew, when I stepped into it, what it is we've missed. And think of all the new ear money we've got to spend!"

"Not all," said Lucy. "Some of it goes into little Tom's Harvard fund."

She had taken off her waist and skirt and stood before the mirror letting down her hair. Tom swung her upon his lap and kissed her softly on the back of the neck, while she shivered deliciously, a little secret smile creeping over her lips. Then she put her bare arms over his shoulders and looked into his face. She was his wife now, his bride. She kissed him happily on the mouth.

"To-morrow, after we get home, we'll polish up Eliza again," she said, "the way we used to. Oh, I'm so glad!"

"Little old Eliza!" Tom laughed. "Good little old Eliza!"

"We'll wax her, too," said Lucy. "We'll make her look like new."

"And we'll use that old rug to stand on while we do it," said Tom.

Lucy laughed happily and gripped her arms about his neck,





### BALLADE APROPOS THE AUTUMN TINTS

THE autumn tints! The brown and gold!
Lovely, of course. I know, I know!
But, still, they leave me unconsoled
For what has gone and still must go;
They mean the closing of the show,
However fair October be;
Let whoso will admire the snow—
Young April is the girl for me.

I know she is a liar bold—
I found her out so long ago.
But, ah, what pretty lies she told,
What promises she made, heigh-ho!
Has she kept one of them? Why, no!
Next year she'll keep them, you shall see;
At least I'll make believe it's so.
Young April is the girl for me.

The days grow short, the nights grow cold,
The rose has long since ceased to blow,
The world seems on a sudden old;
Gone all the glory, all the glow,
And all is reaped we once did sow,
And soon you many-colored tree
Its hectic leafage down shall throw.
Young April is the girl for me.

#### Envoi.

Ah, prince, 'tis time we went below,
Where all fair flowers and faces flee;
We, like the year, autumnal grow.
Young April is the girl for me.
RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.



# The Yellow Streak

## By Charles Saxby

Author of "Her Ladyship's Second Youth," "Her Serene Highness, Limited," Etc.



THE steamer plunged on, blessedly northward, the faint line of the land to the east just a darker smear on the twin night blue of sea and sky; an ugly smear that, for all its distance, was very present with us, the taint of it in our nostrils, the depression of it on our minds.

"The Coast of Fate," murmured one of us, out of that after-dinner silence of tobacco and digestion.

Somebody always makes that remark on every West African voyage; it is almost as inevitable as the fried flying fish for breakfast. But it never loses its effect, and we muttered throaty assents that spurred the speaker on to

further efforts.

"The land of the shattered reputation," he emitted. "The land that only the strong can touch and come away from untainted."

Since that necessarily implied our own immaculate strength, we nodded again, and the man, conscious that he held the center of the stage, went on:

"There's a moral miasma hangs over the place, like the fever mist that hangs over its beastly lagoons, and just as inescapable. I've watched it, I tell you —watched it lying in wait for some unguarded spot in one's mind. If you have a yellow streak in you, it'll surely find it, and then"—he gave a significant, thumb-down gesture—"then —good-by!"

It was all very deep, there was no doubt of that—elemental and psychological and all the rest of it—so we nodded portentous agreement. Then:

"Rubbish, my dear man-sheer rubbish!"

It came out of the gloom under the awnings, clear and sharp as a dash of cold water in our faces. It was Haven who spoke, and we turned to where he sat sprawled out, puffing at a disreputable pipe—one of those small fellows, seemingly compounded of equal parts of nerves and steel wires, with a habit of speech to match.

We none of us knew him very well, for his station was Half Pram, or Kaffradiddi, or some such God-forsaken spot down near the Bights; but he had recently loomed large in the public eye by reason of an affair up in the interior, at Gavirondo, which had brought a

storm about his ears.

"Rubbish," he repeated, with a wave of his pipe that reduced us all to the position of audience. "Africa is all right in her way. The trouble is that we won't be content to take her as she is, but insist on trying to make her over according to our ideas of what she ought to be. Then there are apt to be things doing." He paused, adding re-

flectively: "As to your yellow-streak theory—well—I knew a chap once—"

"Oh—a story?" said the first man, with sarcastic intent.

"Yes, if you want it. The real story of the Gavirondo affair—not for publication, though; a story utterly without a moral. It doesn't matter about telling it now. Besides, most of it took place at Kaffradiddi, which puts it beneath the notice of you big bugs from the Gold Coast.

"Kaffradiddi!" He stopped, staring out over the blue-black immensity of sky and sea as if envisaging the place to bring it the more plainly before us. "That queer little colony sandwiched in between French Dahomey and the sweating labyrinths of the Oil Rivers; a social backwater; a sort of human Sargasso Sea of the Coast, easy to reach, but strangely difficult to get away from again. You can find almost anything at Kaffradiddi—especially what you're not looking for.

"It's a picturesque place, though, backed by forested hills and with almost a harbor in front. There's the inevitable fort, of course, a wedge of obsolete masonry right on the beach; below it, the glaring town, all whitewash and smells, with a big market place shaded by rosy-purple sambox trees. You get the Arab leaven very strongly down there, for it's one of the old caravanroute terminals. For hundreds of years, the merchants of Timbuktu and Jenne have come down to use Kaffradiddi as a port.

"And the people—twenty thousand of them, of every shade, both physical and moral; a choice collection of rather engaging riffraff that drifts in on those trade currents and largely sticks, each contributing his especial drop of human acid to the general fermentation, with about a dozen white men and a company of Hausas sitting tight on top.

"So much for the place. Now for the man. "His name was Brooke, and he came to us from over on the Lagos side, where, for some reason or other, they seemed rather glad to get rid of him. We are intimate with Lagos down there, and we had private advices concerning him. You know how these things go out here—the way in which, if a fellow is known at all, his reputation speeds ahead to prepare a place for him. I especially remembered one such report, spoken in the negligent confidence of a last, midnight drink on the gallery.

"'Oh—Brooke? Yes, I know him,' the chap said. '"Rightful Joe," we call him down yonder. He's so keen on being eternally right about everything that it makes one feel there must be something wrong with the fellow."

"That was all, but it cropped up in my memory the very first time I saw Brooke.

"He turned up at the fort one noon, very unexpectedly and five days ahead of himself. He had found he could save those five days by coming overland from Whydah, and he said he had 'thought it only right to do so.' As I listened to that rather self-conscious explanation, it seemed to confirm what that Lagos man had said of him.

"It had been my lot to be acting police judge, pending his arrival to take the job off my hands. I had just dismissed court and was standing on the gallery, smoking furiously to counteract the mingled stenches of the courtroom.

"Below me was the fort yard, all yellow walls and pasteboard-looking crenelations, with a row of barred slits that marked the old-time slave barracons we used for cells, and one larger slit that showed the state cell reserved for white offenders; a cell that had never been occupied in the memory of any of us. The steps were filled with a loitering, chattering mob of litigants and witnesses. I remember how bored I was with it all that morning, wearily wondering if that human stewpan could boil

up anything that I didn't already know too well.

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"Then, all at once, Brooke came. He was there, right at my side, before I knew it-a tall fellow of about twentysix, well set up, though a trifle frayed by his three years of Lagos. brought, too, that white-man sense which we learn to know so well out here; that atmosphere of baths and barbers, of things ordered and regulated by a strict code, in complete contrast to the raucous, squabbling mob on the steps below. Skins of every hue down there, clad, if at all, in splashes of raw orange, pink, and blue, like a futurist kaleidoscope against that background of vellow wall.

"And up above it appeared Brooke, in his correct traveling togs, framed by an arch against a patch of clear sky.

"The contrast was complete. It was Africa herself down there, in all her slattern gaudiness; the whole flavor of a continent squeezed into the pint cup of that walled-in yard, and there was distaste in Brooke's eyes as he gazed. He seemed to be mentally shoving it all away from him, and I remember thinking then that he 'wouldn't do.' A man can't rule what he is perpetually holding at arm's length.

"Then his glance fell on Jacobah Mc-Tavish, who was standing giggling and pelting frangipani flowers at poor young Crenshaw.

"I've wondered sometimes at the chance that, at that very first instant, brought together all the four people who were most to be concerned in all that followed. But there we were—Brooke, Jacobah, Crenshaw, and myself—all within a radius of thirty feet.

"Jacobah was a creamy bit of Scotchand-Arab mixture, her skin like red gold showing through a magnolia petal. She stood there, bubbling with a vitality that seemed mostly of the devil, wrapped in scarlet trade silk, with silver coins braided into her coal-black hair, her Scotch-gray eyes in startling contrast to her half-barbaric dress.

"And Crenshaw-you know him, though you never met him. coast port has its Crenshaw, all compounded of the same formula-a drugwrecked shell of a chap, not more than twenty-five, deplorably attractive and utterly useless; a bit of human flotsam on the current of the easiest way, his white ducks and tennis shoes a sort of racial whitewash which we slapped on to him again after each of his periodic downfalls. I can see him now-always 'going to pull up,' always going home next steamer, always being fished out of some hole back of the market to be tubbed and dressed over again; a common burden of which we all, in a sort of exasperated affection, assumed our share. He was the enemy of none but himself-that was plain-and yet, as Brooke looked at him, taking in the dilated eyes, the deceptive, half-spiritual fineness of the fellow's face, he gave a quiver of sheer, instantaneous dislike; a dislike that came out of him as he spoke to me.

"'Why do they allow such a man as that to be around? He's a disgrace to the whole white race!"

"Then he looked at Jacobah again, and across the space that divided them, she seemed to feel it and turned her gaze upward to where he stood; a long gaze, beginning in curiosity and ending in—Heaven knows what! Crenshaw spoke to her, but she didn't even hear him, and he slipped away and was swallowed up by the crowd. That was just like Crenshaw—he was always being swallowed up under the color and noise of Africa. But those two just stood and looked at each other.

"How unseen things are! Just two glances, meeting across empty air, but back in the behind-the-scenes of things, where the dramas of our lives are arranged, the stage was set and the curtain signal given. "It was all so open that I couldn't help seeing, and you know exactly what I thought about it, in that grinning cynicism of ours. The usual affair, of course—white man, brown girl; we all know the rest. I had seen enough of those affairs on the Coast to know the signs. But as Brooke wrenched his eyes away at last, I doubted, for there was that in them which I could only in-

terpret as actual fear.

"You must remember, in all this, that I'm working under the surface in the light of later knowledge. Outwardly, he was the same as any other man feeling his way in a strange post, but in that first instant I caught a glimpse of something underneath it all, something that he kept desperately hidden. It was fear that I saw-a sick sort of fear, as of one who sees the approach of something long dreaded. I wondered that the two who had called it out should be the two least among us-Jacobah and Crenshaw, derelicts both, tossed in that stormy gap of things where white and black meet on a perilous equality.

"Her story was a common one on the Coast. Every port has its Jacobah also. She was a daughter of old Angus McTavish, the trader, and an Arab woman who had drifted in, some twenty years before, with one of those bands of refugees that fled from the downfall of Tippoo Tib's roving slave empire; it was even rumored that she was a daughter of the old ruffian himselfa still, brown, hawklike woman, with a look of brooding knowledge behind her eyes. Small wonder, that. Just think of the things she must have seen, trailing all over Central Africa in the bloody wake of that picturesque marauder! Like so many others, she came to anchor in Kaffradiddi. For twelve years, she ruled the McTavish household, and little Jacobah grew up to wear white shoes and stockings and attend school at the Gray Sisters.

"Then McTavish died, suddenly and

without a will. He had meant to provide for his child and her mother, but they had no legal claim. The trading post passed into other hands, while the woman and the girl went down into the town and opened a stall in the market place, queening it there by reason of the white connection.

"Jacobah's shoes and stockings came off and with them went her civilization. She was as tropical now as the hot dust under her bare, ringed toes. From the time she was sixteen, we had looked to see her go her mother's path and—Heaven forgive us—we had offered no barriers to her doing so. But that half tide of Scotch blood in her veins gave a measuring quality to the glance of her gray eyes when they looked upon a man, and so far, it would seem, none of us had measured up to whatever standard she had set.

"But she had seen Brooke now, and she loved him; there was no doubt of that, for she permitted none. He was about the last one I should have picked for her myself, but then women have a way of smelling out a man's qualities, sometimes before even he himself is aware of them.

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"Of course this all took time. I'm really months ahead of my story. Those months had not been easy ones for Brooke, for our verdict on him was the same as that of Lagos. It was as they had said of him-he was so damnably right all the time; and to be liked, a fellow must have his share of human frailty. He struck me as a man perpetually sitting on his own lid, and I wondered what the dickens it was that he was repressing so tightly. That repression separated him from the rest of us, driving him to an increasing solitude, for you can't be on good terms with a chap who isn't on good terms with himself.

"It was his attitude toward Jacobah that puzzled us most. Had he been human about it, had he joked about it, had he been angry about it, had he been anything at all about it, we could have understood. But he chose the part of a rigid, self-conscious ignoring of the whole thing, and it simply could not be ignored, for the moment Jacobah had seen the man whom she desired for her mate, the Scotch strain died in her blood and all that was left was the frank abandonment of Africa.

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"At first we laughed about it among ourselves, comparing Brooke with Adonis, Joseph, and the other pursued heroes of history, but after a while we stopped joking. The thing wasn't really

"I remember one night, when Brooke was down with fever. One of the Gray Sisters was nursing him, but he was apt to be violent and needed a man. For some reason, he had asked specially for me.

"His quarters were high up in the fort wall on the beach side, his bedroom barren as a monk's cell, shadowy in the flicker of the candle, the bloated house lizards scuttering over the ceiling, the shrouded figure of the sister by the window. It was the dark of the moon, so the town was quiet, but up in that room, the night was vocal with a flood of speech as he sat up in his cot, his eyes blazing with fever, pouring out all the things on which his lips were usually so tightly shut.

"'I must not!"

"That was the burden of it, as if, even in his delirium, there was an inner watcher keeping guard. It came with a sense of weariness, as if that sentry before his mental gates was nearly spent. Then would come a rush of words breaking out. Can you imagine a whole continent summed up in one figure painted on the blank of your brain? That was what he seemed to be looking at, that night.

"'A woman,' he babbled, 'a woman, tawny and beautiful— But I gave my word, and I must not!"

"Then he'd begin all over again, pouring out all those things of which we on the Coast so rarely speak. The five scars of the Dahomans, for instance—he talked of them in that dreary, endless monotone.

"'Five scars, on the right breast for the man, on the left for the woman. Why five of them? And why left and right? Why is the image reversed in the mirror? Tell me that if you can.'

"Then would come his vision again, gripping him as a terrier grips a rat.

"A woman—a golden woman, with a blanket of dark forest about her knees, her head in a sky of blue fire!"

"Then more things that ought not to be spoken of. The golden ear, for instance—he knew of that.

"'They say it doesn't exist.' He laughed. 'The fools—it's within a mile of the castle at Cape Coast this very night!'

"That was true, I found, for I wired Accra the next morning, on the chance, and they very nearly nabbed the beastly thing—very nearly. But how on earth did he know of it?

"And all through it, like gray warp on glittering woof, that dreary 'I must not.' There were times when he grabbed me, begging me not to let him go. I had no idea of what he meant, but I promised, and he began intoning in a strange, up-country tongue:

"'Mbara dwana saskya lodie---'

"It rolled through the room in a way that made the sister clutch for her beads, and I marveled as I heard it. It was the opening sentence of the Lion Litany of Sokoto, and I had thought there were only three white men who had ever heard it. I began to suspect his trouble, at that—the trouble of a man who has gone too deeply into native things. It was his solitude that had driven him to it, and, oddly enough, it was just that persistent desire of his to be so 'right' that had kept him so solitary. It was a sort of vicious circle

in which he had gone round and round, like a staked beast, tethered to some-

thing that I could not classify.

"Then again he talked of his mystic woman, but I knew her now. It was Africa herself that he was seeing. She was coming in state with a train of bearers, with hints of gold and ivory, of canoes stealing on unknown rivers, laden with oil and precious gums—a golden woman on a scarlet throne, her head in a blaze of blue splendor. But all that I could see was a glorified Jacobah McTavish, in her scarlet trade silk.

"Suddenly he sprang up with a cry of 'I can't help it! I must go!' and jumped to the floor, throwing me off

like a child.

"His strength was enormous just then, but I flung myself at him and caught his knees in a football tackle, and we went down together. The sister ran to get help, but his brief flash of strength faded as quickly as it had come and he dragged limply as I hauled

him up.

"Then another pair of arms, warm and round, took him from me, and I saw that Jacobah had stolen in. There was no keeping her out of the fort while he was sick, and I had not attempted to do so. Let her come, if she wanted to, I thought. Why not? She laid him back on the cot, pillowing his head on her breast as she knelt by his side. It was against all the rules of nursing, of course, but there's more to that sort of thing than just cold science. I had seen his face as it lay upon her shoulder and, for the first time, it was at peace.

"That was a queer night—the disapproving sister telling her beads by the window while Jacobah knelt there, hour after hour, brooding over the sick man with her warm vitality. Not a word spoken; just the hollow boom of the surf, the creak of a palm branch in the breeze outside, the occasional skittering 'plop' as a lizard fell from the ceil-

ing. Once she bent and kissed him; I met her eyes as she raised her head, large and dark as if all the night were caught in them. Toward dawn, he stirred, and she laid him back upon the pillow and stole out. I went with her across the yard to the top of the step leading down to the market. There she stopped and spoke.

"You shall not tell him of this,' she

said.

"I looked at her, pale under the graying light, her limbs moving stiffly with the cramp of her long stillness, and I

was sorry.

"'Why do you do this?' I asked. 'You know how these things go on the Coast. You'll get him, of course. He'll come to you, in time. And then he'll go again, back to his own country, where you can't follow. Why do you do it, then?'

"'Because I must,' she answered, and went down the steps, under the nightblooming trees which, at the hint of day, were already dropping their flowers like a blood-red rain. That was the difference between them, I felt. She 'must,'

while he 'must not.'

"That night was the turning point of Brooke's illness, and in a couple of weeks he was back again on the bench; and the very first morning he held court, things broke loose. I was in court, watching a case for the government, when it came, with a murmur of voices and the sound, like the sea on a beach, of hundreds of bare feet on the stone flags outside.

"It started down in the market with an insult to Jacobah from some yapping black slut; one of those taunts that she endured daily concerning the failure of her open, unconcealed pursuit of Brooke, meeting them usually with the brooding silence that had come to he of late But this one, it seemed, hal been the one too much. Crenshaw had really been at the bottom of it, joking feebly with the girls as he slopped

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round the market, dazed from a night on an opium mat, hardly knowing what

he was saying.

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"You know these market rows, the heat and glare, the sudden clamor, the squeal of the victim, the surge of the crowd that springs up, apparently right out of the ground; then that other, childlike surge toward the nearest white authority. They came pouring into the courtroom, babbling at the tops of their voices, pushing forward the bleeding victim as 'exhibit A' while a dozen witnesses volunteered the full details.

"Jacobah was with them, cool and still as a snowed-over volcano, in the grasp of a couple of monkeylike policemen. Brooke sat in his chair, pallid from his fever, hardly fit to work as yet, except that he had 'thought it only right' to do so. The sweat dripped off him as he listened to those witnesses; they left nothing to the imagination, and it must have been a flaying moment for him, with its revelation of how his imnost affairs were being talked over, with nigger frankness, round the mar-

"But it was simple enough. The girl was only scratched, and all that was needed was a little barking authority mixed with some Solomonesque justice. I moved over to Brooke, whispering counsel, trying to steady him, but his nerves snapped and he turned to the nigger clerk of the court, his voice high

and cracking.

"'Commit the woman Jacobah to jail on remand and set her case for to-morrow.' Then he turned to Crenshaw, whose half-conscious part in it had been revealed by the witnesses, and all his queer passion of dislike for the poor fellow flamed up as he spoke. 'And arrest that man on a charge of va-

"It's all written on my mind and I can see it still—the strange smile on Jacobah's lips, that inescapableness of waiting in the eyes she turned on her

judge; Crenshaw's stricken face; and Brooke, sitting there on the bench like a man on the lid of some secret Gehenna. I had a conviction that it was the end of something for all of them, and it had come, in a strange way, breaking up from the depths of things through those two easiest wires of transmission—Crenshaw and Jacobah, derelicts, both, of the halfway place.

"And yet in that moment I had seen that if ever a man loved a woman, Brooke loved Jacobah. Her smile, as she turned away, would alone have told me, for in it I read that she had seen

that which satisfied her.

"Brooke's action was as a thunderbolt among us, since both Crenshaw and Jacobah had been our privileged protégés for so long. Once in that state, white man's cell, Crenshaw collapsed. Weakened as he was, the taint of the prison struck in on him, stripping him of all those pitiful pretenses with which he 'kidded' himself along. For the first time, he saw himself as he really was, with a blistering clarity of vision. He was near his time, anyhow, frail as a blown eggshell and as easily crushed. Some of us were with him all the time, calmly setting aside all the jail regulations, and from the bitterness with which every one spoke, I saw it was the end of Brooke in Kaffradiddi. No official can survive the hostility of his own, white caste.

"In that instinct of government that makes us always try to save the face of established authority, I went up to Brooke's quarters to persuade him to release Crenshaw before it was too late, but all I could get from him was a grit-

ting 'I can't do it.'

"'I dare not do it,' he said, as I persisted, pacing about the room like a trapped beast and about as pleasant to be with. 'For my own sake, I dare not have any sympathy for a white man who has gone under into that mess of native black life.'

"'What do you mean—for your own sake?' I asked, and at last, worn out by my importunity, he stopped that in-

fernal pacing and faced me.

"'I'll tell you, for yourself alone, since you've shown some understanding,' he said. 'You'll understand when I tell you that Brooke is only half of my name. My father was Douglas Brooke-Haggert.'"

A low whistle of astonishment went up from us as Haven paused. We all knew the name that he had just spoken. It had happened long before our time twenty years before, at least—but the story still lingered on the Coast; the story of a man with a vision too great

for his own good.

Like his son after him, Brooke-Haggert had come out in the government service steeped in the narrow traditions of his position. But he had seen Africa with too open an eye; he had felt the call of its then still-uncharted spaces of mystery; and, like a Rhodes of the equator, he had conceived the idea of carving from them a country for himself.

It had wrecked his government career, of course. You can't dream great dreams and remain an official—that's certain. Then he had disappeared into the interior, following his dream, and it would seem that he had almost succeeded—almost, but in Africa "almost" is deadlier that not at all. Extraordinary stories of his exploits had drifted down to the Coast. Then the mystery had swallowed him completely until, one day, he had come back, a scarred, broken man with sealed lips.

There he had stayed, in Axim, unable, apparently, to face the ordeal of going home with his load of failure. The end had been swift—a Crenshaw of his day, going out rapidly by the same route.

"I began to understand as he told

me that," Haven went on, noting our nods of growing comprehension. "All the more so, when he spoke again,

"'It was my mother, you see,' he said. 'She wanted me to redeem the name. I was to end as a governor, at

least.'

"I could see it—that odd woman's passion that the son should succeed just where the father had failed in his official career. He told me of it in a few broken sentences—how his whole like had been a preparation, a consecration almost, to just that ideal. He was to do great things in the dear old sanctioned way, finally reassuming his full name as a rehabilitation of his father's memory. But his father's blood was in him, those restless pulses of the born adventurer, only waiting the call of the sun, the magic of the African nights, to set it on fire.

"It had grown in him until it stuck out in his atmosphere, protruding through the ideas proper to a government officer much as the arms and legs of a growing boy will stick out from his last year's clothes. Small wonder that he was always mentally crouching himself up to try and make his civilization cover the growing limbs of that adventurousness. I tell you I've come to believe that those things which we call 'yellow streaks' are often nothing but the sallow arms and legs of a sprouting mind sticking out through an environment too small for it.

"'I knew this place would be the end of me!' he groaned. 'I felt it that very first day, as I stood at your side and looked down and saw those two below me in the yard. She made me

-afraid.'

"'And yet you wanted her,' I hazarded, as a light cracked in my brain.
"'Wanted her—good God, ves!' he

"'Wanted her-good God, yes!' he cried. 'Do you imagine that I don't want her still?'

"'And yet you have shut her up,' I wondered at him.

"'No. It's myself that I've shut up down there,' he said grimly.

"I thought of that row of cells down below, with Jacobah and Crenshaw as two living pictures of his father's career -she, Africa incarnate, the glowing embodiment of that desire which Brooke-Haggert had chased, but never attained; Crenshaw, the pallid portrait

"'But there's nothing inevitable about

all that,' I objected.

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"'But there is, for me,' he replied, with a simplicity that gave me a new view of him. He wasn't the kind to straddle comfortably along, as most of us do, with a foot on each side of the line. He had to have all or none.

"'Can't you see?' he asked, perplexed at my lack of understanding of what was so clear to him. 'If I make the least crack in my defenses, the whole flood is on me.' Then he turned to me in a boyish plea: 'I know I'm a confounded nuisance, but stay with me a while. Don't leave me alone here this evening."

"I stayed, through the dreary pretense of dinner, while down in the courtyard the other white men gathered round Crenshaw. He was sinking rapidly, and toward midnight they sent up word to say that they were taking him away; he had begged so hard not to be allowed to die in jail. Brooke's authority, even the law itself, were being set aside down there, but to preserve the shreds of appearances, I prevailed on Brooke to go down and give the order for the release.

"They were carrying Crenshaw out, setting his cot down in the archway while the gate was being opened. He lay there, his eyes on the squeaking doors as if he could hardly wait for them to swing back. Poor Crenshaw -half problem, half joke as he had been among us! But with the subtle release of death upon his face, I saw what he had been before the queer,

African fire stole into his veins and drove him on his path of squalid

tragedy.

"As the doors swung wide, letting in a rush of cool breeze, he moved and spoke-just one word-'God'-magnified almost to a shout by the tunnellike vault of the arch. That was all. The opening of that gate had let Crenshaw out, and we stood there like so many hushed ghosts in the flicker of the

lamp above the gateway.

"It was the missionary who spoke first-some sort of a converted North Country coal miner, filled with that bleak sincerity of faith which seems possible only to the uneducated. closed Crenshaw's eyes, then pointed to Brooke, his voice quivering with an earnestness that wiped out the uncouthness of his speech:

"'I 'ope thee's pleased wit' thy wark.' "The verdict of the others was written on their faces, and Brooke struck his hands together as he met their eyes.

"'I tried to do right,' he said.

"'Right!' sneered somebody, but the missionary spoke more gently, laying a hand on Brooke's shoulder.

"'Lad, there's mower to life than just being "right." E'en t' heathen know 'Tis written in their heathen books,' he said, and then, to my astonishment, he quoted that strangest of sentences from the Koran, sounding all the stranger for the Yorkshire bur in his words: "An' thou wouldst coom t' God, then putt a knife to t' throat of thy respectability."'

"That was all. They passed out silently with their burden, and the gate closed again, shutting me in with Brooke in that tomblike place. He laughed out loud, and the archway echoed with it, like the cackling of lost souls suddenly struck with the humorof their damnation. I could see the sarcasm of it all-twenty years of preparation, three of struggle, and it was ending like this. He went to the

gate and dragged it open again. I caught his arm as he stepped out.

"'Where are you going?' I demanded and he turned, outlined against the outer darkness as if suspended halfway between the settled realities of the fort and that wide, moonless night out there and all that it cloaked.

"'I'm going where I belong,' he an-

swered quietly.

"'Don't be a fool,' I protested, trying to pull him back, but he put my hand aside.

"'I assure you that I was never less a fool than at just this moment, Goodby. You don't have to speak to me the next time you see me—not unless you

really want to.'

"He went at that, slamming the gate behind him. It was no use going after him, and somebody had to stay there in the fort. Somebody always has to stay, you know. Sometimes I wonder how it would be if we all marched out and slammed the gates behind us. But I went back up to his quarters.

"Next morning the administrator sent down an order confirming me once more as acting judge. I wondered at that, but my first act was to sign a release for Jacobah. Then I went over

to my own bungalow.

"There was a crowd in the market, shifting, uneasy, strangely silent, and I pushed through to see what was up. There was Jacobah's stall, with its red umbrella, its piles of imported gaudiness, her mother, with her grayed hair and witchlike profile, crouching behind it like a bird of prey over a feast of gay carrion. And in front of it, sitting on the ground, as flat in the dust as ever Crenshaw had been, was Brooke.

"I knew the reason for my reappointment as acting judge then, as I saw him smiling up in detached amusement at that ring of black faces all alert with curiosity. You know what it means for a white man to sit down in the market place like that. Strut about, slap your

legs with a cane, bark an order or two, sling a blue-hot joke at some grinning slab of black flesh behind a stall—but to sit down! That is the last step, from which there is no coming back! He saw me, but his smile did not change as he called out:

"'You don't have to speak, you

know.'

"'You young fool, get up!' I sputtered, but he merely smiled on.

"'Why get up?' he asked. 'Come and sit down here yourself. It'll do you good to get a new angle of view. You can't think how different things look from here.'

"'What do you imagine you're doing?' I demanded, and his answer came

lazily back:

"'I'm obeying the advice our spiritual

counselor gave last night.'

"I fumed and expostulated, but it was no use. He merely leaned back on his elbow and smiled, looking up at me with that air of amused insulation from it all. Then suddenly Jacobah came, thrusting her way by a single disdainful finger. She stood there in her scarlet and silver, as magnificently unashamed as he, and he rose and held out his hand to her. I believe it was the first time he had ever really spoken to her, but their understanding was complete.

"'I've been waiting for you,' he said.
'Now we go, you and I—together.'

"I was completely forgotten; all my background of ordered, official, whiteman things seemed wiped out of his mind, and I went my way reflecting that another man had gone down in that African morass. Rather bitter reflections those, for at the last I had come to like Brooke. Now that the repulsion of his struggle was over, the fellow's magnetism had begun to leak out.

"When I returned to the fort, his things were gone, the stall in the market was deserted, and a black giantess was already taking possession of its bare boards and red umbrella. But I was told that they had been seen—Brooke, Jacobah, and her mother—with half a dozen nigger porters, leaving for the bush in a trade canoe heaped with stuff.

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"So he went, dropping as completely out of our lives as a stone cast in the

Haven stopped again, with an air of finality that gave us an uncomfortable sense of being hung in mid-air with no conclusive resting place. Then one of us, the man who had started it all, spoke.

"Well, and what has all this to do with Gavirondo?" he grumbled, and Haven smiled with an irritating prescience of triumph.

"So far we've only proved your 'moral miasma' theory," he said, "and we've landed squarely down in the dust of the market place.

"But as to Gavirondo, that was another affair, and it came three years later. You've all heard of it. A nasty little mess it was, though, with our usual luck, we managed to skin out of it. That a lot of good people, who have never been in danger themselves, didn't like my particular method of skinning out is neither here nor there. The story is of how I came to do it.

"Gavirondo is the usual upriver station—a dreary wall of bush, a sweep of sullen water, a cleared point topped by a line of bungalows, and a native town about half a mile back; a weary place, two weeks by steamer from anywhere else, and utterly indefensible.

"It was that point which was most strongly borne in on me before I had been there a month. I remember the night before it all happened—a December night, with the fog like raw cot on all about us, a thick blackness filled with the drip of the moisture and the sound of the drums in the nigger town.

"I sat in my bungalow and listened,

weighed down with the responsibility for the lives of ten white men and three white women as well, with only a half company of Hausas and a battered machine gun to help. But for all my listening, the sound that I most desired never came to my ears—that chug of a stern wheel, that hoot of a whistle downstream, which would have told me that the steamer, long overdue, was rounding the bend. All I could hear was that ceaseless drip, drip of the fog and the beat of those drums, like rhythmic thunder.

"There was trouble brewing down there on the edge of the bush. Those drums had been beating for a week, and I could imagine 'them' coming in response to that summons, coming at a lope along the twisting bush trails—those myterious 'them' who, go where you will, make all your troubles for you. It is always 'them'—did you ever notice that?

"It had all started round the tomb of the local saint, a wandering, greenturbaned nuisance of a Marabout who had drifted down from Jenne, years before, and died in a most penetrating odor of sanctity.

"Lately there had come another itinerant pest, a professional glass chewer from the desert, who could also blow fire from his mouth and had ambitions to be a little tin Mahdi.

"I'd have had him shot could I have laid hands on him, but he was too wary, lying out in the bush, doing minor miracles, and sending in word to the tribesmen that the bones of the Marabout, in their excessive holiness, would be their protection and that all they had to do was just to walk in and wipe us out and take what we had. That was very nearly true, considering our defenselessness, but their boldness just then puzzled me, for the tribes knew, as well as I did, that the monthly steamer was overdue and might come snorting upriver at any moment.

"I had done all that I could. was nothing left but that grisly waiting amidst the double darkness of night and fog that stretched away on every side; hundreds of leagues of it, all penetrated by a subtle sense of enmity. I thought of the steamer on which I was relying-such a tiny, crawling spot in the midst of that vast obscurity from which, at any moment, almost anything might come bursting on us. I believe I prayed that night, in a fumbling fash-Never before had I been faced with a situation that called so inexorably for something bigger than myself to deal with it.

"He must have been there some moments before I saw him, standing in the open doorway, half in, half out, half real in the light, half like a shape of the vapors that eddied about him. Then I felt his presence and looked up, to see a tall man in a white jibbah, the hood of it drawn over his face so that only a brown pointed chin was visible, with a flash of teeth as he smiled. I gazed in surprise, wondering what queer human jetsam that shoreless sea of the night had cast up on my island of lamplight.

"Then he pushed back the hood, and with the sight of his face, came a rush of memories—the mingled smells of a courtroom, a glare of yellow walls, a man suddenly at my side. It was ridiculous, and yet, in the narrowness of our caste, I hardly knew, for the moment, how to receive him. That jibbah, the deep tan of his exposed chest, all proclaimed him for what he was—a white man 'gone back.' It poulticed to the surface all the poison of my prejudices.

"'Brooke!' I exclaimed, and he smiled again.

"'You can call me that, if you like,' he answered quietly. 'But I'm more generally known as Haggourt Effendim now.'

"Haggourt Effendim! I knew that

name. The mere sound of it brought a rush of pictures to my mind—pictures of great bales of merchandise spread out in the trading sheds at Kaffradiddi. Every month they would come down, with the regularity of express trains—six, eight, sometimes ten cances, manned by hard-bitten niggers with the desert leanness on their limbs and great ropes of muscles across their chests, who could give a clam points on keeping their mouths shut.

"And the stuff they brought! Gum, rubber, and ivory—not much of the last, but the best; dates, such as come only from those little-known oases back of the Tchad; bales of plumes; little bags, weighted to a hair, of gold dust and uncut jewels—sapphires mostly; but always rubber, a regular stream of it on which the other things floated more as an adornment. That merchandise had always seemed almost too good to be quite true, too much like the ensubstancing of some one's dream of what African trade ought to be like.

"Whence it came we could never quite find out. The nigger headmen just pouched the gold they were paid for it and said, 'Haggourt Effendim is our master. He is a great effendim and he lives up there.' Then would follow a nod in the general direction of northwest Africa, which was very illuminating. But Haggourt Effendim had become a legend on the Coast. We imagined him as a mysterious figure, cloaked by the veil of the interior and sourrounded by all the barbaric luxury of a master of the safari trade.

"Small wonder that I stared at Brooke in astonishment.

"'You—you—are Haggourt Effendim!' I echoed.

"'Brooke-Haggert, you see,' he replied, almost apologizing for the dramatic flavor of his title. 'My people did the rest.'

"It was that careless 'my people' which opened my eyes. This was a dif-

ferent man from the self-tormented chap I had known in Kaffradiddi; there was a poise, a sense of mastery over that unknown background of his. I remembered those canoemen and the goods they brought. It had taken a strong hand to rule and wrest those from the grudging mazes of the bush.

"But it seemed all wrong, somehow. If he were to be permitted to 'get away' with things in this fashion, then where was the reward of the rest of us, who, in our superior virtue, had sternly resisted those African fascinations all

about us?

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"'So you've given up your ideals of an official career?' I asked, rather nastily.

"But he merely smiled again.

"'My mother's ideals, you mean,' he replied. 'The old dear is charmed with things as they are. What she really wanted was simply that I should succeed, in some way or other. Women can stand for a lot if we only do that.' "'And Jacobah?' I asked, still un-

pleasantly. 'Is she with you?'

"'What did you expect?' he asked, his eyes narrowing. 'She's not only with me, but she's here.'

"He moved aside, and I caught the outlines of another figure looming through the fog. She came forward, sparkling with beads of moisture. It was Jacobah; a woman now, a quiet, luscious sort of woman who, the instant you saw her, you knew must be a mother. The change in her was equal to that in him. They struck me with a sense of danger as they stood therethey were so still, so young, so vital, and so untroubled by the questions that perpetually nag at us.

"As I looked at her, all I could think of was Brooke's ravings of that night She seemed so much his woman of Africa come true. I could imagine them on their marches, crossing the grass country from God knows where to Heaven knows less-Brooke

in the lead, like a sun-tanned bundle of high-voltage wires; the long stretch of the safari, with its flags, muskets, and string of porters, a splash of vocal color across the blue-and-gold spaces; Jacobah, carried in her hammock, wrapped in blue-tasseled country cloth, an ivorycolored baby on her lap, a dozen black women pattering beside her, and her hawklike old mother borne behind her. . "So that was what Africa could be to the man who knew how to take what

she had to give!

"'I owe it all to her, really,' said Brooke, nodding as if he knew what I was thinking. 'She and her mother, with their native knowledge, have given me half a continent to roam in. From Gondokoro to the Niger-all open to me.' Then he turned the tables on me, stern with purpose. 'You're in a nice mess here. What do you mean to do?'

"'The steamer!' he repeated, as I began to explain. 'Why, man, the steamer piled up a week ago on the Lokoja Shoal, and those brutes over in the town

yonder know it.'

"My hopes dropped away, leaving me stripped before the bleak necessity that confronted me. His news explained things too well. The Lokoja Shoal was nearly five hundred miles down the river, but news has its own way of slipping through the bush. I knew that, and it made me feel like a fly caught in the web of that queer nigger knowledge all about us.

"'We heard it four days ago, up north of here,' he went on. 'We came at once, with six canoemen, as fast as

we could.'

"'Thanks,' I answered gloomily, wondering why he hadn't brought a hundred men instead of six. 'But I've done all that is possible. There's nothing now but to wait.'

"He looked at me, much as a man outside might look at one who was shut in somewhere with his range of vision limited by the directions in which his windows opened.

"'There are times to wait—yes,' he said. 'But there are also times to strike, and this is one of them. Strike, man! Strike at the very heart of things, and strike hard.'

"'Where is the heart of things?' I asked.

"'I'll let Jacobah answer that,' he said, 'since it's her idea.'

"She stood there, the girl I had known seven years before trotting white-stockinged up to the sisters' school under the cocoa palms in Kaffradiddi. She smiled and spoke, much as she might have asked me to afternoon tea.

"'The tomb of the Marabout,' she said. 'That is the heart of it all. Burn the tomb to-night, dig up the bones, scatter them to the crows, and thus bring great shame on the tribesmen.'

"Old Angus McTavish's girl, with Scotch in her blood—a dangerous mixture that, Glasgow and Ghadames. Her words came with all the knowledge inherited from that still-eyed old mother of hers. She knew those people, striking at the very underpinning of nigger nature-that savage, uneasy egotism, that childish dread of ridicule which is at the root of all their secrecies. What she was proposing would tear those tribesmen up and scatter them. But then-a black trick like that! A desecrating of a tomb, with its denial of all our white traditions! I had those other lives to account for, and yet I began pacing the floor in a struggle with my ideas of what it was possible for a white man to do. A battle with my own pride, • really; so much of our cherished virtue is really pride.

"Having spoken, Jacobah sat down, femininely concerned with her hair, while Brooke watched me in sardonic amusement. Our positions were reversed from that other night in Kaffradiddi. "I did it, though, with the help of some of the Hausas. The drums had stopped and the tomb was deserted, its 'ju-ju,' in that black mixture of Islam and fetish, being too powerful to be adventured after dark. It loomed up amidst the sodden bananas, surrounded, as by impotent guardians, by distorted shapes of fog dipping and drifting in the glare of the torches.

"The grins of the Hausas, their murmurs of 'good palaver' as they caught the idea, showed me how effective the thing would be, but all the same something died in me with the first ring of the spades under the wattle-and-plaster dome. I parted with something that night. I stepped out of all that I had ever been, stepped across all the barriers I had set to my own conduct, and —I shall never be proud again.

"We didn't burn the tomb. I left it outwardly intact, that the shock of the interior might be the greater. Once I had begun the affair, other ideas came thronging, ideas worthy of the trick I was playing. There was nothing sacred about the place when we got through.

"Back in my bungalow once more, we watched while the lamplight paled in the dawn and, with the coming of day, the drums again struck up their arrogant beat. They were drawing nearer, gathering round the tomb for their morning orgy of fanatical faith in the blessed bones. Then came a Silence, hush, sudden and complete. that was all, though my ears ached from the strain of listening; just silence, and the fog filled with a strange sense of scattering flight which told us that 'they' were taking to the bush again, hiding What bethe shame of their faces. came of the glass chewer who had deceived them I never knew. The bush keeps its secrets well.

"It was all over and Brooke rose, stretching the weariness out of his lean length. "'You'll be all right now,' he said carelessly. 'We're needed up north again. Come along, Jacobah.'

"'You're not going like this!' I protested, but he merely looked at me in

somber understanding.

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"'We've done all we came for. We should hardly fit into the scheme of

things here, should we?'

"I couldn't deny his meaning. I knew, as well as he did, how they would be received by those others, awaking in their bungalows strung along the river bank; fine, upright examples of

our nation, all of them, clinging more tightly to their principles than even to their lives. If you doubt that, you have only to remember their indignation at the manner in which I saved them that night.

"Brooke nodded with another gleam of that saturnine humor. Giving Jacobah his hand, he stepped out with her into the fog. From the gallery he turned and spoke once more before the vapors swallowed them up.

"'It's funny how things turn out

sometimes, isn't it?""



### MOVIE MAGIC

T is November and the skies are cold; An icy wind whirls down the dingy street; A beggar hobbles by on crippled feet; The world and I are very, very old.

Faintly I hear the call of violins—
A motley gathering seeks the picture show.
Into that world of shadow shapes I go;
The unreal ceases, and the real begins.

A small boy whoops aloud in ecstasy;
A woman draws a single sobbing breath
To see Adventure grappling there with Death,
Romance come face to face with Mystery.

And when at last the wedding bells are rung (Short intermission. You may keep your seats.)
Homeward I swing down starlit, singing streets.
Ho, heart of mine, the world and I are young!

ELIZABETH HANLY.



Yesterday

By Adele Luehrmann

Author of "The Sheltered Life," One Man's Opinion," etc.

HE clock on the mantel struck two. In the grate below, a few coals still burned, sending out a warm red glow, and through the wide doorway leading to the hall the rays from the chandelier at the foot of the stairs entered the room in a wedge of light, glancing off the mahogany of the chair rims or sinking softly into the rich brocade of the upholstery. Except for the gentle ticking of the clock, the stillness was unbroken.

Then, slowly and cautiously, a key turned in the street door. There followed a short pause. Then a man appeared under the chandelier and stood looking into the darkness of the upper hall, listening intently. His overcoat collar was turned high about his jaws and his soft hat was pulled down over his forehead, but, even so, the light revealed enough of his face to show him to be very young, hardly past twenty.

Satisfied by the silence, he returned to the door, which he had left open, and beckoned to the girl waiting outside. She entered timidly and took several furtive steps forward.

"Brrrrr!" She made the inarticulate. shivering noise involuntarily, as the warm air of the house struck her chilled body.

"Sh!"

Her companion gripped her arm, pulling her into the room, then waited again, straining his ears for sounds from above. Reassured after a minute, he stepped back into the hall and noiselessly closed the outer door.

Left alone, the girl stood rigid, staring about the dimly lit room, until, as if irresistibly drawn by the glow of the fire, she crept over to it. Then "Brrrr!" broke from her once more, in spite of herself.

"Sh!" the boy, returning, warned again; adding in a whisper, as he joined her at the grate: "We've got to be careful about waking my mother."

She nodded, and shivered again silently.

"If you'll come on back to the kitchen, I'll find you something to eat," he continued, turning to a closed door just at the right of the mantel. "But please be careful not to make a noise," he looked back to caution her.

"Wait a minute," she begged in a whining undertone, "I'm cold. I been out since ten o'clock an' not a chance to warm up-an' it's two now."

Her eyes moved from the dim face of the clock to his face, and, reading consent in it, she dropped at once to her knees before the fire, carefully placed her gaudily colored silk wrist bag on the rug beside her, ripped off her gloves, and held her hands close to the live coals. She was a little thing. The outlines of her figure in the fashionably cut, but obviously cheap tailored suit she wore were meager almost

to childishness, and her face, thin and pale, with shadows about the eyes, was

pitifully young.

The boy shifted uneasily from one foot to the other while he waited. Nervously he rolled his hat and crammed it into an overcoat pocket; then unbuttoned the coat, revealing his evening clothes beneath. After a minute, as if moved by the pathos of hermot of her youth, for he was himself too young to feel that, but of her littleness, perhaps, being himself of stalwart build—he took a step or two

"I'm sorry I haven't any money to give you," he whispered apologetically and went on to explain the accidental lack of which he was boyishly ashamed. "I'd just taken a girl home from a dance—hadn't expected to, you see—and the cab fare cleaned me out. But I could give you a little money to-morow—send it to you—if you'll tell me where. I'll be glad to help you." He hesitated; then: "Have you—ever tried to—to get work?" he faltered.

She glanced up at him over her shoulder a moment in silence.

"D'you think I live—like this 'cause I wanter?" she queried back with a bitter, half-derisive smile. "But I'm much obliged to you," she added hastily in a different tone, fearful, apparently, of offending him, "if you mean what you say—about the money."

"Of course I mean it. Tell me where

you live."

"Sixty-eight Market Street—I got a room there. My name's Jennie Hyatt."

"I'll write it down before you go," he said. "But we'd better go back to the kitchen now. It's warm there, too." Stooping, he picked up her bag with one hand, while with the other he took hold of her arm to help her to her feet. "Keep close to me and go slow, so you don't knock into anything," he admonished. "My mother's room is just over the dining room and—"

He stopped short, and the hand on her arm released itself suddenly to join the one that held the bag. Together they felt its contents.

"There's a pistol in here!" he exclaimed in an astonished whisper.

The girl sprang to her feet at one bound of her light body.

"Gimme that bag!" she demanded anxiously, reaching for her property.

He backed away from her, holding the bag behind him while he scrutinized her wonderingly.

"What are you doing with a pistol?"

he questioned.

"Gimme my bag!" she repeated more loudly.

"Sh!" he cautioned.

He took the weapon from the bag and examined it, while she waited, watching him, one hand poised as if to dart out at the first favorable moment and snatch the thing from him.

"You could be arrested for carrying this. It's against the law here. Don't you know that? And it's loaded, too!"

"Wouldn't be much good if it wasn't,

would it?"

He eyed her curiously again. There was something so incongruous in her ownership of the object he held, for it was no lady's toy, but a man's size, businesslike affair designed for use.

"What are you carrying this for?" he asked again. "Most girls would be

afraid to touch it."

She turned away and her hands clasped one another nervously.

"I'm—I'm afraid of somethin' worse than that," she muttered, shivering.

He stared. It was clear that she was not jesting, that she was afraid, and with a fear that struck her cold to the marrow.

"What is it?" he asked, after a pause.
"Never mind that. Gimme my gun,"
she answered, again reaching for it.

"I'm not going to keep it," he protested, though he still held it away from her. "Can't you tell me why you carry it?"

"What's it to you?" she retorted with a touch of sullenness. "Give it here!"

"Of course I'll give it to you—it's yours," he said mechanically, looking at the small, outstretched hand, evidently so eager for it, yet seemingly so unfitted for its use. "But I wish you'd tell me what you're afraid of. I might be able to help you."

She shook her head.

"You couldn't do nothin'," she said with the calm accent of despair. "There's a man swore he'd get me that's all."

"Get you?" he echoed blankly. "Not -kill you?"

"Sure. An' he will, too, if he ever finds me."

He drew back, staring.

"What for?"

"Because I sent him up—for three years—for stealin'."

"Oh—I see," he murmured, his eyes widening upon her with fresh amaze-

She gazed back into his face, suddenly intent; then her glance traveled the length of his figure, down the white expanse of his dress shirt and waist-coat, along the carefully creased trousers to the patent-leather pumps, and from there lifted again to skirt the simply, but richly furnished room, its details more clearly visible now that her eyes were accustomed to the semidark-

"No—you don't see. I guess you couldn't," she said dully. "But you wanted to know, so I told you. You been good to me—promisin' to send me some money an'—to give me somethin' to eat."

She looked past him toward the door that he had intimated led to the dining room and from it to the kitchen, where food was to be found.

He seemed not to notice the hint, continuing to stare dazedly, a slight

pucker between his eyes, as if he half believed and half did not-could notbelieve her. It was incredible enough her being there at all-a girl like that -in his well-ordered home, the center of his own well-ordered life. But his bringing her had come about quite naturally. She had accosted him a few blocks away as he had been walking home and-well, he had felt sorry for her; she was so little and she had said she was hungry. It was not quite the thing to bring her right into his home. but there had seemed no other way, He had had no money to give her. And his mother would say he had done right when he told her next day; only, of course, it wouldn't do to have her hear them now and come down. He couldn't bear to have her speak to such a girl.

"You ain't got anythin' to drink

handy, have you?"

At this second reminder of his promise, the boy nodded.

"I'll give you some sherry. Come on, now. But look out. Keep right behind me and don't talk."

As he uttered the final admonition, he arrested his advancing foot. It was true that they must not talk in the kitchen. Sounds from there were more easily heard in his mother's bedroom than they could be from the room in which they now were. It would be safe enough to take the girl back and get her some food. He was in the habt of foraging when he came home late, and if the noise of their moving about should awaken his mother, she would think nothing cf it. But he couldn't risk talking.

And he wanted to talk. He wanted to hear the rest of her story, the details. It was his first personal contact with such an affair and he was boyishly excited by it. Dropping the pistol back into the bag, he handed it to her.

"How did it all happen?" he asked. She gave a quick little shrug of resignation.

"Well-if you gotta know, I'll tell you," she answered. "I was chambermaidin' in Chicago for some rich people an' we got acquainted, I an' him. Then he asked me to marry him, an' I said all right. He wasn't young, but he was a swell dresser an' a good spender. An' then right away he started talkin' hard luck. That was his game, you see-gettin' girls crazy about him, girls like me, workin' in big houses. Then he'd persuade 'em to fix it some way so he could get in an' help himself to the silver, or anythin' else. Then he'd skip an' leave 'em, an' they'd keep quiet, of course, bein' in it as bad as he was. But I was raised honest. An', anyhow, I'd just got on accidental to his goin' with another girl, an' I was so mad, when I found out it was so, I didn't think what I was doin'-I just wanted to get even for his tryin' to make a fool out o' me. So I told on him an' they sent him up."

"I see. And now you're afraid he'll

try to get even?"

"I know he will. He sent me word—said he'd get me soon as he got out if it was the last thing he did on earth. An' he's out now. They give him five years, but he got two off—for good behavior!"

Her lips curled derisively.

"But he doesn't know where you are, does he?"

She shook her head.

"I don't guess so. But I don't know where he is, either. That's why I'm livin' like this—why I ain't workin'. I'm scared o' stayin' in one place. It's safer to keep movin'."

"By George, that's tough!" said the boy, with hearty sympathy, thoroughly impressed by the story. Then, after a moment, as she made a suggestive move toward the door, he repeated the warning he had given before and together they tiptoed out.

When the lock had clicked with the closing of the door behind them, silence

once more fell upon the room, broken only by the clock. One minute it measured off, then another and another; then came sounds from the stairs—a light step, a rustle of silk—and a woman suddenly appeared in the circle of light shed by the hall chandelier. She was in a lavender negligee that hung softly upon her tall, slim figure, and her rich black hair was loosely coiled upon her neck.

Slowly, but without pause or hesitation, she descended the steps and entered the room. Approaching a window that gave on the street, she cautiously drew aside the shade and looked out; then crossed to a table and switched on the light of a lamp stand-

ing upon it.

Now, for a minute, she seemed irresolute. She moved toward a chair beside the table as if to sit down, stopped, turned, and took a few steps away from it; and finally, halting again, felt within the folds of her dress and, taking out a roll of money, began to count it, in a barely audible voice:

"One hundred-two-three-"

The crisp bills rattled in her shaking fingers and, as she bent a little toward the lamp, her handsome face showed pale and drawn.

"Nine hundred—a thousand—one—

She stopped short with a catch of the breath and stood rigid, listening. On the concrete walk outside the house heel taps struck sharply. She waited, hardly breathing. The tread without ceased an instant, then began again, coming up the stone steps of the house. Hastily cramming the bills into her bodice, she hurried to the street door.

The knob shook under her trembling touch as she opened the door and drew it back to admit the man who was waiting there. A mute gesture directed him toward the drawing-room, and, having closed the door again, she followed

him.

For several moments, they faced each other in silence. Insolently his eyes swept her from head to foot, and she returned a steady gaze, though her hands, pressed close to her sides, were so tightly clenched that the knuckles showed white.

In the face of the man an expert in physiognomy might have traced some remnants of original good, but the look of hatred and triumph that it now bore left no room for any nobler feeling to show itself, had any been there. Well dressed, he wore his clothes with an air of custom, but had no other marks of gentle living. Even so small an indication of good breeding as the removal of his hat was absent, and the rather jaunty angle at which he wore it went oddly with his sinister aspect and with his age, which was fifty or thereabouts.

"You're looking pretty fit, Cora," he remarked, breaking the pause at last. "Nineteen years haven't changed you much. I'd known you anywhere. Being rich and respectable seems to agree with you."

He gave the second adjective a mocking emphasis, and the woman swallowed hard, but did not open her lips.

"Guess you've been congratulating yourself all these years that I was dead, eh? When I walked up to you today on the street, you looked at me as if you thought you saw a ghost. Well, the ghost has come back now—and very much alive, as you'll find."

He gave her a meaning glance, then let his eyes travel slowly around the

"Swell place you got here."

"Tell me what you want," she brought out huskily.

He turned back with a jerk of his head.

"You know damned well what I want —money!" he snapped.

"Sh!" she warned nervously. "Don't talk so loud!"

"Why not?" he questioned sharply,

but in a lower tone. "Who's to hear? You said you'd be alone."

"I am, except for the cook. But my son may return at any moment, so-"

"Your son? Why don't you say ours?" he interrupted with a sneer. "Thought you said he'd be out of town."

"He changed his plans late this afternoon. I had no way of letting you know. He went to a dance and may be back at any time now. Let's get through with this. How much do you want?"

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"Ten thousand."

"Ten!" she exclaimed. "Why—I can't give it to you! You're my husband, and I'm willing to do what I can for you, for the boy's sake—on condition that you keep away from him. You understand? That you keep away from him!"

"Huh!" He gave her a sneering grin. "Never heard of me, eh?"

"No," she admitted, after a slight hesitation.

"Thinks I'm dead-eh?"

"Yes."

"Huh! Well, how much is it worth to you to have him go on thinking it —and other things I might mention?" She pulled the money from her

bodice and held it out to him.

"There's two thousand—

"Two! Say, what kind of a fool do you think I am? It was a quarter of a million old Bowen left you."

"It was nothing like that much!"
"That's what the papers said."

"They didn't know and couldn't find out, so they fixed the amount to suit themselves."

"Well—maybe. They made a good story of it, all right. Guess you've forgotten, my dear girl, what a damned good story it was. A doddering old skinflint without kith or kin takes up with a woman of the street. Then he ups and dies and leaves her all his coin.

It was a good story all right-but not half as good as it would be now!"

"You couldn't prove it."

"Oh, couldn't I?"

"No," she returned steadily. "You haven't an atom of proof to connect me with-that woman. No one knew where I went when Bowen died, except his lawyer, and he's dead now, too."

"Well," he snarled, "what if I can't prove it? You'll never let it go that far. You've got too much to lose. You can't bluff me. I want ten thousand dollars, see?"

"I won't-I can't give it to you. I haven't got it. This is all I can give

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He looked at her, then at the bills she held out, and finally, in sign of definite refusal of her offer, he slid his

hands into his pockets.

"Been looking you up since we met to-day, Cora-or-pardon me-Mrs. Smith. Good name, Smith. Nothing fancy about it. Nothing to start folks asking questions about your husband's family, eh?" He leveled his ugly grin at her. "Well, I found out a few things. Found out that you own this place, and that you're a liberal contributor to charities and a pillar of the church. And you're quite a leader in society, I'm told. What do you do it all on, eh? The fifteen per that cub of yours pulls down at his swell bank job?" He chuckled derisively. the way," he added, "I saw him to-day. Had a nice little chat with him at the bank."

"You spoke to him!"

"Now don't get excited. We only discussed preparedness." Again his mocking laugh broke out. "But, God, what a jolt I could have given him!"

"You let him alone!" gasped the woman. "You keep away from him! I'm warning you now, Jim Ellison! If you ever make yourself known to him. or even hint that his father is aliveif you ever dare to tell him-anything —I—I—\_"

"Well-what? What will you do?" sneered? "Nothing! You can't bluff me. If you want to keep me quiet, pay me my price. If you don't, here's what I'll do. And I'll do it! Now I'm warning you, Cora Ellison! You come across with the ten thousand or I spit the whole yarn!"

When he stopped, she did not at once answer, and for a while they stood facing each other in silence. Several times her throat worked as she swallowed, and at last she spoke. Her voice was

strained, but steady.

"I'm willing to do what I can for you, Jim, but don't go too far, because I'll fight. I mean that. I've hundreds of friends here, friends who trust and respect me. And"-she broke off for a moment, then finished with lifted head -"after all, I've done nothing I'm ashamed of."

He stared at her rather blankly, as if her defiance had taken him aback.

"You drove me into the street-because you couldn't make a thief of me! And if I sold my body, it was mine to sell! I never robbed any one of anything. I never injured any one in the world, knowingly. And I regret nothing that I did-because I had to do it for my child."

As she had continued, the strain in her voice had given place to a calm tensity, and it was plain, even to him, that she spoke more to herself than to him. Silenced at first by surprise, he presently shook himself free of it.

"That's what they all say!" he sneered. "Why didn't you go out and

work for him?"

"Because he was always sick-you know that. I couldn't leave him all day with strangers. He'd have died."

"Aw, keep that sob stuff for your swell friends-the ones that respect and trust you! And see what they say!" he taunted. "And you know damned well what they'll say! They'll tell you you could have put the brat in an orphan asylum and scrubbed floors for a living. They'll tell you there's worse things for a woman than stealing—that you'd better have been a thief than what you were. That's what they'll say—and you know it!"

At his words, as if the deep truth of them had pricked her courage, as a balloon is pricked by a needle, the defiance died out of her eyes, her chest sank, and she turned away. He watched her without further words,

knowing he had won.

"If I give you the ten thousand, will you promise not to come here again?" she questioned finally.

"I'll promise nothing. Ten thousand

is what I want now."

"And you'll come back—again and again and again! I shall never know another moment of peace as long as I live!"

"Well, you got one chance. You may outlive me," he jeered. "Come on, now, make up your mind. You were in a devilish hurry a while ago—said the kid would be coming home. Think of the shock it would be to him to find me here! Been bringing him up along the straight and— What's that?"

From the rear of the house had come the sound of breaking glass or china.

The woman gave a frightened start and her face blanched. Crossing swiftly to the dining-room door, she opened it and listened; then closed it again and hurried back to him.

"It's—the cook," she said breathlessly. "She must have come down to the kitchen for—for something. You must go. Here, take this money. I'll give you the rest to-morrow. I'll have to arrange—sell something. Hurry!"

He hesitated, glaring at her suspi-

"When do I get it?"

"To-morrow night—at the same time. Hurry—hurry!"

She urged him toward the hall, but pushing him along, and the instant be disappeared around the turn leading to the street door, she wheeled back, anxiously watchful of that other door. A moment she paused, listening for the click of the lock that announced Ellison's departure; and after it, with a relieved sigh, she at once started for the dining room. As she did so, Ellison's head appeared advancing cautiously at one side of the doorway behind her. The next moment he had slipped through the hall toward the back of the house, unheard by her.

Her hand had barely touched the knob of the dining-room door when it was pushed against her from the other side. She drew back involuntarily, and as it opened, it hid her from those entering and them from her. But when it swung back, they were face to face.

"Mother!"

From Cora Ellison no sound came. Her eyes had swept past her son to his companion and seemed focused, in that first amazed instant, on every damning detail of the girl's appearance—the cheap, smart, mustard-colored suit, the high blue shoes, the gauly bag, the tinted lips, helplessly agape.

The boy, red and horrified by the meeting of the two, now pointed

sharply toward the street.
"You go," he ordered the girl. "I'll

explain."

"Wait!" interposed his mother. "What is she doing here?"

"It's my fault, ma'am," the girl put in quickly. "You see, I spoke to the gentleman. I—I asked him for a little money to get me somethin' to eat. An' he didn't have any on him, so he brought me in here an' give me somethin' in the kitchen. That's all—honest to God, it is!"

"Is this true, Roy?"

"Yes, mother. She hadn't had a thing to eat since noon, she told me."

"An' I hadn't, neither," declared Jennie Hyatt.

Cora looked at her again, but now the startled horror was gone from her gaze, leaving it only deeply troubled. "Where are you going when you

leave here?" she asked.

"I'm goin' home—I got a room."
"And have you no money at all?"

"No, ma'am. But he said——" She turned toward Roy, pausing uncer-

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"I told her I'd send her some tomorrow," he explained. "She can't get any work, because—" He hesitated a moment; then, deciding that it was unnecessary to harrow his mother with the truth, he substituted, "Because times are so hard now, you know."

She nodded.

"Yes, I know. Go up to my room and get my purse. It's on my dresser," she said; adding, as he turned away to obey: "And don't come down until I call, please."

At that he stopped. He understood the last request; his mother wanted to talk to the girl alone, to try to reform

her and all that.

"Mother," he said impulsively, drawing her aside, after a nod of apology to their companion, "won't you go for the money? I—I'd rather you would. You don't understand. You mustn't—I—I can't let you stay here and talk to her. You—well, you don't understand what—kind of a girl she is."

He brought the truth out at last with a flush of embarrassment and his words and demeanor were to his hearer like the echo of Ellison's mocking taunt: "They'll tell you you'd better have been

a thief than what you were."

She winced sharply and stood away from him; then, recovering herself, she

said very quietly:

"I understand perfectly. Will you do as I ask, please? Please," she repeated, as he still lingered.

There was in her quiet tone a note

he had learned as a child to heed, and he yielded to it now, though with obvious reluctance.

When he had left them, Cora turned

to the girl.

"Won't you sit down? I want to talk to you," she said kindly.

Jennie Hyatt's face clouded.

"You needn't begin preachia'!" she returned sullenly, refusing the chair offered her. "I got my reasons for—for what I do."

The older woman regarded her in silence. What she saw now was not the flagrant externals of costume and bearing. She saw only the youth, the fragility, the pallor, and, deeper still, the wounded, trembling soul.

"What reasons?" she questioned

gently.

"What's it to you?"

Again there was a pause, while the woman sought another approach.

"You're right," she agreed suddenly. "Your reasons don't matter. All that matters is that I want to help you—and I think I can."

Jennie gave a hopeless shrug.

"There ain't nothin' you can do. You don't know what I'm up against."

"No—and I won't ask. But I'm sure I can help you. Will you tell me how old you are? You look very young."

"Oh, I ain't so awful young-I'm

twenty-one."

"Twenty-one!"

"Don't I look it? God, I feel it!"

A murmur of pity broke from the woman, but she did not speak. She knew there was nothing to say.

"The only thing'll help me any is—money," said the girl. "Enough to get me out West somewhere—'way out, where—where nobody ever heard of me."

Her hearer nodded understandingly, "I suppose you have—people and a home?" she ventured to question.

Instantly the young face darkened again.

"None I can go to," said Jennie

Hyatt shortly.

"No—of course not," said Cora sorrowfully. "If you were a boy, you could go back and everybody would hold out a helping hand to you, but the world won't give a girl a second chance—I know that." She sighed, then continued: "But—what do you want to do when you get out West?"

"Why-I hadn't thought. I-I just

wanted to get there first."

"Do you think you'd like to go to a ranch—just for a time, until you were strong and well? I know of one—I lived on it myself once. The people who own it are my friends, and I could send you there. They'd be very kind to you, and you'd have good food and fresh air and horses to ride. It's a wonderful place—away off in the mountains—miles and miles from a railroad and—"

"From a railroad!" exclaimed the girl, with an incredulous stare, as if such remoteness struck her as impossible. "Is that right?" she questioned eagerly. "Oh, that'd suit me fine!"

"Then you shall go. And when you're well and strong again, you can make up your mind what you want to

do next."

"You mean you'll send me there buy my ticket an' pay for me to stay an'—an' all?" Again the incredulous stare. "Oh—I—I don't know what to say to you." The young voice broke.

Cora took her hand gently.

"Don't say anything to me, my child," she answered. "But there's something I do want you to say—to yourself—every day you live—and over and over again. It's this: 'Yesterday is as dead as Babylon.'" She studied the girl's face. "Do you know what that means?"

"Babylon?" echoed Jennie blankly. "Oh—it's in the Bible, ain't it?"

"Yes. It was the name of a city—a city like this one, alive with people—

people like you and me. But the people who lived there are all dead now. They've been dead thousands of years, There isn't even a house left-just a few walls that they have to dig down to get to, because the dust has blown over them so many, many years that they're all buried. And so, when a man once wanted to say that yesterday-the day that was here, in our hands, just a few hours ago-is already beyond our reach, he said it was as dead as Baby-Because we can't relive yesterday any more than we can relive a day thousands of years ago. Do you understand?"

Jennie Hyatt nodded slowly, her eyes wide.

"And you wouldn't worry about the mistakes a girl had made in that old city of Babylon—a thousand years ago —would you?"

"Why-sure not."

"And it won't do any more good to worry about the mistakes you made yesterday. Don't you see? It's only to-day and to-morrow and all the days after that belong to us, and they're the only ones to think about. But--" She paused a moment while she felt for the girl's other hand, and, eager to respond, Jennie laid the bag it held on the table beside them. Then, with both young hands within her own, Cora went on: "But if memories come back of things you wish had never happened, if a horror of the past comes over you-as it will sometimes-say to yourself: 'It never happened. It never happened.' Say it over and over. And by and by the memories will come back less and less often, until they will seem like bad dreams-things that never did happen-that never could have happened-to you."

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"Oh—if only they never had happened!" said the girl with a little gulp-

ing sob.

"No, no-you mustn't say that! Say

they didn't happen—they did not! Say

"They—did—not—happen," repeated lennie falteringly.

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"Turn round and refresh your memory," Ellison's jeering voice broke in from the doorway behind them.

Both women recoiled, wheeling to face him, and the younger gave a chok-

"I said I'd get you before I was through, but I wasn't looking for luck like this."

He made a move forward, and a scream of terror broke from the girl as she backed away, putting the table between them.

From the hall came Roy's plunging steps.

"Mother! Mother! What's the matter?" he shouted as he ran.

"Oh, save me-save me!" shricked

Jennie.

"Mother!" the boy called again.

But from his mother no answer came. She stood white and still, frozen with horror, conscious only of Ellison's evil face turned expectantly toward the doorway and of her son's hurrying steps.

"Save me—save me!" repeated the girl automatically.

Roy lunged into the room.

"What's the matter?" he cried. Then, at sight of the man, he fell back a little. "Who are you?" he exclaimed.

"He's the man I told you about! Oh, don't let him get me!"

"What are you doing here?" demanded Roy excitedly.

"That's my business," said Ellison.

"You followed that girl here! I know who you are! You're an exconvict!"

"Roy! Roy!"

The boy wheeled at sound of his mother's cry.

"Mother, that man has just served a term in the penitentiary! This girl

found out he was a thief and told on him and he swore he'd kill her for-"

Ellison broke in with a snarl of rage. "Shut up, damn you!" he commanded, and shoved a pistol in the boy's face.

"Roy-oh, Roy, be still!" Cora

Ellison glared over at the girl.

"Yes, I swore I'd get you and I will. Come here."

Trembling violently, Jennie did not move. She seemed unable to do so.

"Come here," repeated Ellison, "or I'll shoot you where you stand."

With a gulp of terror, his victim started forward.

"This way!" ordered the man, with a directing jerk of his head.

"I—I just wanted to get—my bag," gasped Jennie.

"All right," he growled. Then, as she advanced toward the table again, "Wait," he said. "I'll take that."

He turned impulsively to execute his purpose, forgetful for the moment of the boy beside him, and the instant he moved, Roy, like an animal held at bay, saw his chance and sprang. His lithe form landed full on Ellison's back and sent him sprawling across a large armchair. With a furious oath, the latter squirmed halfway to his feet and struck at his assailant with his pistol.

"Roy-Roy!" gasped his mother in

terror, running forward.

Jennie Hyatt moved, too, quick to see her advantage. Snatching her bag from the table, she fled to the hall, and the next moment the street door slammed noisily behind her.

At the sound, Ellison yelled his rage. "You make him let me go!" he shouted at Cora.

"Let him go, Roy-let him go!" she implored.

But her son had no such intention. He had caught the wrist of the hand holding the revolver and bent it to a safe angle, and, recovering his grip on Ellison's other arm, had again pinioned him across the chair.

"I've got him now, mother!" he exulted, feeling in every inch of his body the thrill of triumphant strength. "I can hold him! You get the whistle and call Duggan."

Stricken with horror and fear, his mother did not move.

"Hurry, mother-hurry!" he panted again.

Then Ellison ceased struggling and lay inert. An ugly laugh came from him.

"Yes, hurry!" he mocked. "Call the police!"

"Go on, mother—go on!" urged Roy. Cora gulped. She moistened her lips and opened them, but nothing came.

"Mother, get the whistle!" ordered the boy impatiently.

"Yes, get the whistle!" taunted the man. Then, with a snarl of fury, he yelled at her: "Here, I'm tired of this! You make him let me go—if you know what's good for you both!"

"Mother, hurry! Call Duggan!"

"I can't—I can't!" she gasped. "Let him go at once! I command you, Roy! You must—"

Frantically she caught her son's hands, striving to loosen their grip, and in his astonishment at her action, he did slightly relax his hold. Feeling it, Ellison made a supreme effort and partly freed himself; but the next instant Roy was upon him again, and this time his violence succeeded in wrenching the pistol from the other's hand.

"Now, I've got you!" he cried.
"You try to leave this house and I'll
-kill you!"

"Roy!" came in a wail of anguish from the woman.

"I've got to, mother!" panted the boy, white with excitement. "If I let him go, he'll kill her! He said so you heard him!"

"My God-my God!" moaned Cora.

"Well?" called Ellison, glaring at her.

She staggered toward her son, her arms out in frenzied appeal.

"Don't shoot—don't—don't!" she begged brokenly. "Let him go—"

At that moment, with her body be tween them, Ellison risked a dash for the door. Instantly the boy thrust her aside, his hand with the pistol shot forward.

"Roy!" she screamed. "He's your—father!"

The word was not more than a breath, but he caught it. His whole frame moved violently, then became still and inert. The revolver dropped from his relaxed fingers to the floor at his feet.

Ellison sprang for it. The boy made no effort to stop him.

"If that girl escapes me to-night, I'l make you pay for it!" the man threatened, starting for the door again. The it banged after him. He was gone.

In the room there was only silence. Mother and son faced each other. In anguish, she watched the workings of his mind reflected in his features—saw incredulity, doubt, wonder pass and give place to horror and revulsion.

Suddenly he reached out and gripped her shoulders.

"Mother," he challenged in desperate appeal, "tell me it isn't true! It isn't! You said it to stop me! Say you didn't mean it!"

She closed her eyes to shut out the sight of his horror.

"Don't—look at me—like that," she faltered.

"Say you didn't mean it!"

With a moan, she turned her face away. He released her as if she were hot iron that burned him.

"My father!" he said to himself in a low, tense voice, and twice he repeated the words as if to test them by some inner standard: "My father!"

"Roy-don't look like that!" she

cried, her own hurt lost in the thought of his suffering. "Oh, my boy, my darling—I'd rather have died than have had you know!"

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"You told me he was dead." The young eyes accused her sternly.

"He was—to us," she pleaded. "Listen, dear. Less than a year after our marriage, I left him, and I've never seen him from that day to this—never heard from him. I didn't even know whether he was alive or dead."

"Oh—I see," he murmured, and his tense face relaxed a little. "You found out what he was—and left him?"

"Yes," she answered in a choking voice.

His eyes softened, and with an impulsive movement, he swept her into his arms.

"Forgive me, mother! I was a brute—I didn't understand," he said tremulously. "I was shocked—I couldn't think. Don't cry! I didn't mean it!" he begged, as, in her relief, she yielded to a rush of tears. "Don't cry—please——"

A pistol shot in the street rang suddenly through the room. Mother and son sprang apart, then stood rigid, listening.

A second shot.

"He's got her! He's killed her!" cried the boy.

"God help me," breathed the mother.
"Listen, mother! Somebody's running this way!"

"Put out the light!" She ran, as she spoke, to the table and herself switched off the lamp. Then, in the shadowy darkness, they waited.

"Coming here!" whispered Roy suddenly.

"He's come back!" broke from Cora. The doorbell rang. With a smothered cry, she started for the hall.

"What are you going to do?" Roy questioned sharply, following.

"Open the door," she answered.

"No, you're not!" he said, barring her way.

"I must! Let me by!"

The bell rang again.
"Let him ring!" snapped the boy.
"What have we to do with him?"

"You don't know what you're saying! Let me by!"

"No!" He caught her by the arms and held her.

"Roy, Roy," she gasped, frantic with her fear, "let me go! He's your father—he's my husband! I must let him in!"

"No."

A third ringing—violent and broken. "You're mad!" Cora panted, trying to break from him. "Do you want the whole world to know he's your father?"

"I don't care! He shan't come into this house! He shan't come near you again!"

His mother stared at his set face wildly.

"You don't know what you're doing! Roy, for God's sake have pity—on me!"

"On you!" He drew back sharply and looked at her. "What do you mean by that? You mean that you—love him?"

She caught her breath in surprise at his unexpected interpretation of her words, words that only her desperation could have wrung from her. Then she seized the opening he had offered.

"Yes," she said, and as she rushed by him, she did not see the stare of revulsion with which he had released her.

She threw open the street door and Jennie Hyatt lunged in.

"You!"

"Hide me!, Hide me!"

"What's happened?"

"I shot him."

The girl staggered forward, and Roy caught her and half dragged, half carried her into the room to a sofa. As she sank upon it, her pistol slipped from her limp fingers.

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At the thud of its fall, Cora started, then stood staring at it, shuddering.

"Did you-kill him?" she questioned

fearfully.

The girl shook her head.

"No—but I think it hit him, 'cause he stopped runnin' for a minute. Then he started again and he fired at me. Then he stopped again—— Oh, hide me—hide me!"

"Did anybody see you?" asked Roy.
"I don't know—I ain't sure. As I was startin' up your steps, a man turned the corner—down that way."
She jerked her head to indicate the direction. "I think he saw me. Anyhow, he stopped an' looked up this way."

"It must have been Duggan. Was it

a policeman?"

"No—I could see that much. I watched him while I waited for you to let me in. He couldn't see me then—I was in the vestibule. An'—maybe he didn't see me at all. But just as you opened the door, he started runnin' up this——"

"Listen!" cried Cora.

Silent, except for their hard, quick breathing, they waited, listening with strained attention to the approaching steps in the street.

"He's stopped," Roy whispered.

"Now, he's gone on again."

"Gone by!" said Cora in relief.

Roy tiptoed to the window and stood there, his ear pressed to the pane.

"He's calling Duggan!" he said, as a shrill whistle pierced the stillness. "And that's Duggan's answer," he interpreted a second whistle. "I hear him running. Now he's stopped. They're talking. Now they've started walking again. They're coming this way!" Cautiously he drew aside the window shade and peeped out. "Why—there are three of them!"

"Hide me! Hide me!" begged the girl, springing up. "He's coming!"

"Sh!" Cora caught her by the hand.

Roy crossed to the two women,

"She'd better get out of the house, hadn't she—at the back?" he suggested excitedly. "If they come here, they'll search the house and——"

"Let me think," said his mother,

stopping him with a gesture.

Her face was gray and her body shook as with an ague. For a moment or two, the boy and girl watched her silently; then Roy burst out again:

"I could let her out the back way and she could get through the alley—"

"What's the use?" Cora interrupted again. "He knows she shot him and that she came back here."

"That's right. No use to run now. Besides, it's self-defense—why shouldn't she face it? He'd have killed

her. He did shoot at her."

"There's a chance that he didn't tell," murmured Cora, as if thinking aloud. "It wouldn't be like him to take his revenge that way. The man who saw her running may be bringing them here."

"They are coming here!" whispered Roy. "They're on the steps. You two go upstairs and I'll go to the door."

"No, I'll go," said his mother. "Yes, yes, do as I say," she insisted. "You and she go into the dining room and keep still."

The doorbell rang.

"Sh!" warned Cora, and waited without moving until Roy had quietly closed the dining-room door after himself and his companion.

The bell rang again. Cora started for the hall, but stopped halfway,

irresolute.

"I don't believe he brought them here," she thought. "He'd take some other way—for the money." With sudden decision, she pulled the hairpins from her hair, letting it fall about her shoulders. The pins she dropped into a vase that stood near.

The bell rang again and now continued in short, intermittent peals.

Turning once more to leave the room, her eye fell on the pistol, still lying where it had fallen. She stooped to pick it up, but shuddered from the touch of it and, extending her foot, shoved the weapon out of sight beneath the sofa. Then she hurried to the door.

"Who is it?" she called in a voice that by all her force of will she con-

trived to keep steady.

"It's me, ma'am—Duggan," came the answer in the patrolman's familiar

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"Officer Duggan?" She opened the door. "Why—what's the matter, officer?" she asked, peering fearfully past him to the two men standing behind him in the dark vestibule. But the Irishman's huge frame blocked the doorway, making it impossible for her to see the faces of the others.

"It's sorry I am to be disturbin' you, ma'am, at this toime o' night," he said. "But there's been a shootin' down street an' there's a man says he saw a woman run up your steps right after. Could anny wan get in at your front door,

ma'am?"

"Why-how could they?"

"Sure, that's what I told him, but he swears be all the saints 'twas this house."

"It was, too—whatever she says!" came with sharp positiveness from one of the hidden men. The other did not speak.

Duggan ignored the interruption.

"You didn't hear annythin' yourself, ma'am—anny wan runnin' up street, maybe?"

"My room is at the back of the

house."

"That sittles it, then. I ain't askin' annythin' better than your word, Mrs. Smith. I been knowin' you now goin' on noine years it is. Sorry I had to disturb you, but 'twas me duty."

"I understand, officer."
"Good night, ma'am."

He turned away and literally pushed the men with him out to the steps. From the one who had spoken a dissatisfied grumbling issued. Then, with a spurt of boldness, Cora spoke:

"Officer, who was it that was shot-

one of the neighbors?"

"Oh, no, ma'am—a stranger. I don't know his name, ma'am."

"Why-wouldn't he tell you?"

"Oh, sure, ma'am, he was willin' enough, but he's dead."

"Dead!"

"He is, entoirely. Good night, Mrs. Smith." And Duggan closed the door.





# The Try-Out

By Mary Lanier Magruder



F course, Sylvia," Mrs. Van Tromp said, as she set down her cup, "we who are on the inside of things know that Ross is more in love with you than ever. And since the Linderman money proved to be mostly on the kind of paper cub reporters circulate, I've the idea it's a bitter pill for Ross to swallow—your husband getting richer every minute since the war, what with oil and copper. Some persons have all the luck."

The smile in Sylvia's eyes gave place to a flash. Marcia Van Tromp, secretly

pleased, hurried on:

"Of course one can't fail to see what you've done for Eugene. You always were clever, Sylvia! And the way you got your engagement announced, and forestalled Ross Delavan, after I whispered to you that he was going to marry Marianna Linderman— Well, you turned the trick neatly. How'd you do it, Sylvia?"

"If I told you, you'd be as wise as I,"
Sylvia said. Her lip curled up as at
some secret amusement as she nibbled a
wafer.

"You always had the pride of Lucifer," Marcia said. Her voice was a high, affected tremolo, and, to Sylvia, there was a rasping undertone in her words. "I'd never thought you'd have taken Eugene Mattison. Oh, of course I am perfectly crazy about him now, but at first he was—well, impossible. You'll admit that, Sylvia."

"No," Sylvia said calmly. "He never was impossible—only different. I remember at first I thought him too big, too obvious." She laughed a little,

Mrs. Van Tromp smiled discreetly as

she left her chair.

"Well, he's perfectly wild about you, Sylvia, though in a different way from Ross. I wonder if you ever told him about Ross."

"My dear Marcia, what was there to tell? There never was a definite betrothal between Ross and me."

The leash of Mrs. Van Tromp's temper slipped. Her voice rose shrill with laughter—and another emotion not classified here.

"You know quite well you always expected to marry Ross, only you were both too poor, and the unaccommodating uncle got married again. Every one else expected it. And I don't think Eugene Mattison is the type to play second fiddle—if he knew it. And a woman Ross Delavan had practically jilted? I recall your husband's expressed contempt for the 'Delavan breed.'"

The high tremolo of her voice had died away as had the froufrou of her skirts. Sylvia advanced to the hearth, where a fire smoldered, although it was May. The angry color in her face had faded; the little smile had crept back to her curved lips. She stood looking into the coals, one white arm extended along the back of a chair. So deep was

her reverie that she did not know her husband had entered from the adjoining room and stood looking at her.

There was no smile on Mattison's face—rather, the intense pallor of one who has suddenly and surprisingly drunk of wormwood and found the taste thereof exceedingly bitter. Hard, shrewd, world-wise as he thought himself, he had been cleverly caught in a silken net. He came forward to the hearth. Sylvia looked up, still smiling.

"Raining, isn't it?"

"Perhaps," he replied. "But I don't think any fact of the weather matters to us just now. What does matter is, was Marcia Van Tromp lying or telling the truth?"

He heard her sharp intake of breath; her lips, too, lost a shade of their car-

mine.

"So you overheard?" she said.

"Yes. And I judge Mrs. Van Tromp is no friend of yours."

"Oh, yes!" Sylvia said, her lip curling. "But she was in love with Ross Delavan herself, once."

"And you cut her out!" Mattison said, the beginning of an ugly smile on his mouth. "And you'd been the same as engaged to Delavan for years. And when you discovered accidentally, I take it, that he was going to throw you over and marry the Linderman girl—well, I was the goat!"

"I don't think I should express it in those terms," she said, shrugging her shoulders. But her lips were pale.

"Damn your terms!" he said contemptuously. "I'm in no humor to quibble with words. I've had made clear to me what I confess has puzzled me a bit—why you so suddenly became gracious after ignoring my existence for six months. You knew I'd been hanging around for a look at you, for a word. I wasn't the sort who could love any woman; I'd never seen one I wanted to marry till I saw you. It was all up with me then. I remember I told

you once that I would give all—and demand all. And you lied and cheated me---"

"No!" she said peremptorily.

Two splashes of crimson sprang to her cheeks. He broke in harshly on her hesitation.

"Were you betrothed to Ross Delavan?"

"We--"

"Were you?"

"Yes; in a way."

"And on the night of the Harrisons' dinner dance did you hear for the first time that he was going to play the quitter?"

"Yes," she said quite steadily. "We had been too poor to marry. We both had expensive tastes and, besides—"

"I see!" he said. "And so it was poor little Marianna and me for the goats, as I said."

Sylvia went nearer and laid her slim, lovely hand on his arm. Her face held its smile; it seemed to Mattison that it was too steady.

"Eugene, what Marcia said was true only in part. I had discovered that I had never really loved Ross Delavan."

He shook off her hand.

"I'm in no humor to be cajoled, Sylvia. Why don't you face the music and speak up candidly, now that your friend has spilled the beans? She's a fair type of your friends, too! She knew I was in there. She saw me go in. I talked to her in here until I heard you coming down. She had it in for you and saw her chance for getting even, but I wish to God she hadn't butted in on my fool's paradise!"

He turned his back to her. With his hands deep in his pockets, he glowered

at the fire.

"I'd have sworn that you loved me, and that's a fact," he said thickly. "We are always too credulous where we want to believe."

Through her narrowed lids, her eyes smiled softly upon him.

"But I did love you," she said.

At the vibrant sweetness of her voice, his hands clenched and his head spun. But he was a man of strong pride and stubborn passions, and now jealousy in the saddle laid whip and spur to him.

"Last night you danced four times with him—and once with me. And I'd never have thought of it unless that woman had wised me!"

"You only asked me once," she reminded him,

"You know I dance abominably. You had no right to make yourself conspicuous to those who, like Mrs. Van Tromp, are 'on the inside of things.' And Delavan's wife at home because there's going to be a baby—why wasn't he there with her?"

"My dear Eugene, you will have to ask him-or her." She shrugged her shoulders.

"And he's still in love with you." There was a pause. He faced her then. "Well, I think I can attend to that. Since there's no remote chance, if you have your way about it, of your ever being temporarily out of society for the same reason that Delavan's wife is, I think I shall take you where you'll have ample opportunity to forget Delavan for a while."

Her lips parted in a sort of amused smile.

"Eugene, you're not at all your charming self when you talk and look that way."

"Well, it's the real Mattison talking now, and don't you forget that for a minute, Sylvia. I've let you civilize me a bit and make me over in ways that suited you and didn't harm me, but I'm no chalk-faced puppet of a man. I'm flesh and red blood, and you're my woman. If you did love me, it's all well and good for you; but if it's like that Van Tromp woman says, why, I guess you're going to meet up with some things surprisingly out of the ordinary run of life for you. You'd better go

upstairs now and have that pert French woman of yours pack your things for you. We'll cut short our sojourn here and hit the trail—which happens to be the Midnight Limited—for home."

"Home!" she said blankly. "Home!" "Home. Montana. The ranch," he said with staccato emphasis.

"But, Eugene," she began, pale, now, and protesting. "After all we've spent on this house, and our plans—"

"Our plans are changed," he said curtly. "You've made a fair imitation of a society man out of me. Now I mean to see what I can do to make a woman—a wife—out of you. And later—"

His eyes held hers until, as his meaning became clear, the color rose darkly to her face.

"But I prefer to stay here," she said.
"And I," he retorted, "prefer that you go with me. Get that?"

With his hand on her shoulder, he continued to gaze down at her until she found his gaze hard to bear. The color went out of her cheeks; a frightened pulse beat in her throat. It seemed unreasonable even to consider that he husband meant what he said. Yet the steadiness of his eyes assured her that he did.

But in her room, confidence in her power over him returned to her. He, who had been so long suppliant, would not be likely to assume, in an eyeflash, the rôle of conqueror. So far, he had been as plastic as wax in her hands; the thought had come to her more than once that she would have respected him more had he been more the master. But this whim would pass; sober reflection, powerfully aided by the desire to discredit Marcia's story, would leave Mattison in a different state of mind.

With this decision, Sylvia dressed for dinner, choosing her gown with a fine, discriminative smile. She knew just how the old-gold crêpe supplemented with its deeper tints her olivewhite skin and amber eyes and contrasted sharply with the red line of her lips, her black hair and lashes. She went down to dinner well pleased with her own reflection in the glass.

But though she waited until the soup was cold and the roast overdone, Mattison did not come. Nor did he telephone an excuse, as was his habit when

detained downtown.

The clock had struck ten before she heard him come in. He gave an exclamation of surprise and displeasure.

"What does this mean? Why aren't

you ready?"

She forced a laugh up out of her blankness.

"Ready? Don't be silly, Eugene!" For reply, he jerked out his watch.

"You have an hour to spare, I couldn't get here earlier; there was so much to be arranged. I have our reservations."

She stood up, angry and amazed. So he meant it, after all!

"I'm not going, Eugene," she said

"But you are," he said, "so let's not argue about it. You know your position too well to throw me over now. Divorces are going out of fashion, anyway. So you had best hurry. Sometimes I'm not patient."

He went on to his room. After a while, he heard her coming up the stair. He entered her room without ceremony.

"You'll need the simplest things. Antoinette, get busy. Pack your mistress' plainest clothes. You may have the trunks later, but we're not going to worry with much impedimenta tonight."

Antoinette looked from one to the other—from her mistress' face, with its inscrutable smile, to Mattison's, whose expression was unfathomable. Then Mattison stepped back into the room. His eyes held the Frenchwoman's for one significant moment. He seemed to toy with the articles on the dressing

table. Then he went out and shut the door. Antoinette, too, found it necessary to hover about the table for a brief space. Then she fell to her packing, but not until she had peeped at the figure on the bank note she slipped into her bosom. Of the two, Antoinette decided, it was more profitable to take orders from Mattison.

But her mistress made no demur at the preparations. At eleven, Sylvia, in her dark-blue traveling dress, descended the stair. Behind her, similarly garbed, came Antoinette with the bags.

"You won't need Antoinette," Mattison said. "Wenona, an Indian girl, will

be your maid out there."

The ranch house lay among rolling acres walled in on three sides by the everlasting hills. There were twenty rooms and half a dozen servants of sorts. The housekeeper, Mrs. Hobbs, an English-Canadian, greeted Mattison affectionately as "Mr. 'Genie," and kissed the astonished Sylvia on the cheek. Upstairs, the Indian girl, Wenona, waited, soft-footed, soft-voiced. She surveyed Sylvia with a wooden, but inclusive stare; her awkwardness and silence contrasted strangely with the definess and chatter of the deposed Antoinette.

Sylvia went down to dinner that first evening with the inscrutable smile firmly fixed. Her gown was so startlingly plain that it conveyed the impression of simplicity exaggerated to an art. Mattison, in smoking jacket, stared at her.

"You'd as well cut out that dolling up. We'll likely have folks dropping in to lunch or dinner—only we call it supper—and they're likely to wear store clothes or a flannel shirt and corduroys. So I'd not embarrass them, if I were you, by Fifth Avenue styles."

"Perhaps I should embarrass myself

by leaving them off,"

"You admit, then, you are not adapt-

able? And yet you expected me in Rome to outdo even the natives?"

Wenona had mysteriously disappeared, after dressing her mistress for dinner. Sylvia, at the unfamiliar task of brushing her own hair that night, faced a pale reflection in the glass. Her little smile of amusement was quenched. Her glance fell upon the bunch of keys lying upon the table. Her husband had handed them to her as he had bidden her good night; they were the keys to her suite. Mattison's own rooms were in the west wing, with the width of the house between. It seemed incredible to her that her dominance over him was She had accepted his devoslipping. tion with a certain amused pride at its intensity.

The days went on fast enough; it seemed to Sylvia that she had been picked up bodily and dropped into an existence as foreign to her own as that of any Chinese walled city. The conventions had slipped from Mattison as one might shrug off an unnecessary garment. He went about in riding breeches and puttees, the collar of his rough flannel shirt open and a vilesmelling pipe between his teeth. brought in friends who talked and laughed loudly, who called "Genie," and played poker with him for two-thirds of the night, but who were shy and silent in the presence of Mattison's wife.

Sylvia got the feeling after a while that they disapproved of her, and the sensation was unpleasant. Sylvia had never met disapproval. The remote Latin strain in her blood had given her a softness and sweetness; she had cultivated these gifts as carefully as she had her personal beauty and grace. They had been her only currency in the market place, and they had served her well. But here she seemed shoved aside as something too ornamental and useless.

Mattison was vastly busy. His im-

portance as the center of his little world's solar system was too plainly evident to Sylvia. Back in New York, he had been at first one of the hundreds of men whom the war had suddenly made rich; later, he had earned some claim to distinction as Sylvia Endicott's husband. He had always been the alien. But here he was on his own domain, sovereign over his own vast holdings. Their positions were exactly reversed.

Her ignorance of even the simplest things, knowledge of which is necessary and vital to the existence of those far from neighbors or physician, more than offset the lack of social wisdom on Mattison's part. This was brought to mind sharply when Mack Jennings, rustler, and "Bowleg" Sandy, cowman, met and mixed it on the borderland of the ranch, and the other cowmen brought Sandy into the living room and dumped him unceremoniously on the couch.

Sylvia gave one look, then gasped and fled.

She was still faint and shuddering, with her vinaigrette in her hand, when Mattison broke into the room.

"Come on down here, Sylvia, and help us. Sandy's cut up pretty bad. We want hot water and bandages, quick!"

"Where's Wu Long?" she said.

Mattison stared at her.

"I don't know where the devil the chink is! It's up to you. Hurry!"

"But I—I can't! The—the blood, Eugene!"

He flung her a contemptuous glance. "Oh, I see! I'm used to seeing women I know—the real women—attend to these things. And so I forgot I beg your pardon, really."

He turned on his heel and left her.
Sylvia was no longer faint; instead,
her heart was racing now in hot anger
and humiliation. What right had Mattison to expect such things of her?
And where was Mrs. Hobbs? Then

she remembered that Mrs. Hobbs had gone to Sago.

After the passage of some harried minutes, Sylvia went slowly down to the living room. Sandy, a bloody, battered wreck, had come to his senses. He was howling with pain and rage. His shrieks, punctuated with lurid profanity, sent icy shivers down Sylvia's spine. Her knees sagged under her.

Mattison had cut Sandy's shirt from his body, and the blood weltered from a long gash across his chest, while a rivulet ran down one arm and dripped on the rug. One of the men had made a tourniquet from a dirty bandanna, but the red stream persisted. Sylvia shud-

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Mattison looked at her over his shoulder.

"A sponge and some water. Is there any bichloride?"

She had not the remotest idea what bichloride was, but she fled kitchenward and returned after a bit with a basin of water and bandages torn recklessly from Mrs. Hobbs' supply in the linen closet.

She knelt by Mattison. Sandy, at sight of her, became suddenly inarticulate in his groanings. Mattison none too deftly cleansed the wound on Sandy's breast.

"Buck up," he said. "It's not deep. Half a dozen stitches will close the place when the doctor gets here."

"Oh, Gawd!" Sandy said impiously. "Hell! You hurt!"

"Give me the sponge," Sylvia said.

Mattison felt how icy cold her fingers were. He knew, as he glanced at her, that if she released the grip on her under lip, her teeth would chatter like castanets.

"Game!" he thought with a secret

He watched her untie the bandanna; a jet from the severed artery spurted out over her fingers. Mattison hastily applied the clean binder and twisted it into the flesh until Sandy howled again,

"Shut up!" Mike Connor advised.

"You make the lady nervous."

"The lady" smiled shakily as she ran back for clean water. The men exchanged approving glances behind Mattison's back. As Sylvia reappeared in one doorway, the young doctor entered at another.

"Afternoon, all!" he said cheerfully. "And where's the post-mortem?"

"Go 'way!" Sandy muttered. were so long coming that Mis' Mattison's got your job.'

"He can have it," Mrs. Mattison said

with a pale smile.

She set the basin down, took two steps forward, then tumbled over into Mattison's arms.

Her recollections after that were vague for some time. Some one carried her upstairs; she had the impression that some one had held her close and kissed her. But she found herself on her own bed with her husband standing by the window, his hands in his pockets.

"You'll get over your squeamishness in time," he said unconcernedly. "And now I'll send Wenona up."

He went back to Sandy.

As the weeks passed, Sylvia learned the lingo of the ranch. She also learned to wear her khaki skirt to lunch and to eat with an appalling appetite. The olive-whiteness of her skin had darkened to pale lemon, but she had never been more beautiful. Sandy had become her fast friend, and the others had become less constrained in her presence. She had learned new values; she had gained some indispensable knowledge. She knew now the tricks of the favorite cow pony and the stubborn roan Mattison had given her for her own. But she had not yet plumbed the surprising depths of Mattison's mood.

With a curious, uneasy fear at her heart, Sylvia yielded to her restless mood one day and took an unfrequented path out beyond the corral. Wenona's shack lay at the right of the turn in the path. Wenona sat sewing in the door, squatting on the ground with her scarlet cloth over her knee. Sylvia smiled appreciatively. Then she saw beyond Wenona the child, Gray Wolf.

The boy was at play with stones in a circle. Wenona looked up and grunted; the child shrieked and fled to

his mother.

"Is he yours, Wenona?" Sylvia said.

Wenona nodded.

"Him Gray Wolf."

Sylvia stood smiling, an enticing hand held out. The child was the typical black-haired, bullet-headed Indian youngster, but Sylvia became aware that the eyes fixed unwinkingly upon her were a deep, peculiar blue.

A blue-eyed Indian! Sylvia, more interested, continued to smile and hold out a beckoning hand. Her fingers half-inclosed a lump of sugar originally intended for Dicko, the cow pony. But as in an eyeflash, her fingers and the smile on her lips stiffened. Where had she seen eyes of such an intense and brilliant blue? Whose, indeed, but—

For an instant the thought held her appalled. Then she turned, with a little nod to the child, and hurried up the path. Gray Wolf, true to his cognomen, howled lustily at the prospect of vanishing sweets. To Sylvia, the cries

had a sinister portent.

That evening at dinner, Mattison surprised her gaze fixed with singular intensity upon him. Instantly she averted her eyes and began a conversation with Sandy, who was now convalescent, regarding the relative merits of Dicko and the roan.

"Now the roan's thoroughbred; he'll go to the last lap if he dies at the finish. That's what thoroughbreds are like. Flesh don't count with them; it's something inside them. That cow pony's prairie bred. He'll go till he gets tired; then he'll ker-flop. Flesh is what counts with him. He's steel wire in the laigs, but he's punk inside—just plain punk. Folks is that-a-way, too, Mis' Mattison."

"Yes," she said, "and life's the try-

out, Sandy."

"Yes'm. Now here's me and 'Genie
—we're plainsmen—prairie bred. But
I guess you're thoroughbred all right,
Mis' Mattison."

She colored warmly. Mattison had frowned and lowered his gaze; now he looked up quickly.

"But it's the cow pony that gets us over the rough places—out here."

"And it's the thoroughbred that wins you the race," retorted Sandy.

There came a day, a week or two later, when the thought of the blueeyed Indian child held a strange poignancy for Sylvia. The intensity of her emotion surprised her. She had accepted certain standards for men as inevitable under the existing order of things; she was no iconoclast. She had had the expectation, when she had married, that her husband would be true to her, but that she would exercise no right of surveillance over any past indiscretion of his. But something here confronted her that had to do with the present. The girl Wenona was an inmate of the house; she came and went with a freedom that Sylvia had resented from the first.

"Oh, let her alone!" Mattison had said. "Wenona is a privileged character."

Her face burned even in the darkness as she remembered. She had come out on the piazza, beset by loneliness, and leaned over the railing to watch the full moon come up from behind the foothills. The purple sage was in flower; the air was pungently sweet with the scent of it. From the kitchen, weird sounds floated up; Wu Long was chant-

ing a Chinese boat song. Mrs. Hobbs' voice rose in a camp-meeting melody. The strains did not blend; rather, the piercing wail of the West drowned the falsetto chant of the East.

"I'm going home! I'm going ho-ome-"

Sylvia's lids fluttered. Home! But Eugene had said that this was home.

She wondered where he was; at the bunk house, perhaps, with the men. They often played cards till midnight—to the horror of Mrs. Hobbs, who was religious and prayed for them, Mattison included, every fourth Sunday night at the Methodist class meeting in Sago.

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Sylvia caught the scarf about her shoulders and went out into the moonlit trail. Her steps turned, of their own volition, to the path beyond the corral. At the corner where the trail curved, she almost ran into a tall figure speedsing silently by. The pad-pad of moccasined feet, the rigid profile she glimpsed, were not those of a white man.

She had stopped short, startled. Now she was yet more startled by a voice coming out of the shadows than she had been by the phantomlike runner.

"You leave Charley Yellow Horse alone, Wenona. He's dirt—that's what he is—and I won't stand for it. There's the kid. Don't you be forgetting his white blood, Wenona. You savvy me?"

The voice was Mattison's. After a pause, it continued, in louder and more rapid tones;

"If he don't keep away from here, I'll larrup him until the yellow that's in him shows up under his red hide! I don't know but what, for the kid's sake, I won't larrup you!"

Sylvia, sickened and faint, leaned against the fence. Mattison dealt with the red woman as he did the white. Both were dirt beneath his feet.

She lay awake for hours. It seemed to her she had just fallen asleep when Mattison's voice outside awoke her: "Sylvia, get up. You're riding with me to the Judith Valley to-day."

She made no answer.

"Sylvia!" he said. Then, "Sylvia!" When silence still met him, he wrenched the door open and walked in. In the gray dawn, he saw her eyes wide open and fixed upon him with a startled gaze.

"Get up and dress yourself," he said.
"If you refuse, I shall have to perform

the office of maid for you."

He leaned over and lifted her out the bed and set her on her feet. Her hair swung in long plaits over her bare shoulders; her lids fluttered and she shrank from Mattison's eyes.

"I-I don't want to go. I'm tired

and sleepy."

"Well, we'll strike the trail for the hills and you'll get rested. Now shall I——"

His gesture, even with his smile, was significant.

"Oh, please go!" she entreated. "I'll dress quickly."

When she had drunk the scalding coffee Wu Long hurried in to them, she felt less dazed and shivering.

"I've got you a parka—a hood," Mattison said. "You'll need it, sleeping out these nights in this high altitude."

"Sleeping out?" Sylvia said, aghast.
"We'll be gone a week," he said briefly.

On the long trail east, she met his terse remarks with a silence that was epigrammatic. Indeed, by the end of the first day, she was so exhausted that speech was impossible. They made camp at the foot of a hill where a little stream flowed ice cold from the mountains. Mattison flung down the blanket roll, and Sylvia sank upon it.

"You've only a minute to rest," he said. "I've got to whip the stream for trout for our supper. You make the fire and the coffee and slice the bacon."

But she sat there stubbornly. If he wanted his meal, he could cook it. She,

Sylvia, was going to sleep. She was too dog-tired to eat, anyway. She unstrapped the blankets, rolled herself in them, and almost immediately fell asleep.

Mattison awoke her by shaking her roughly.

"Get up!" It seemed to be his favorite form of address for her. "Considering that you're pretty tired, I've made the fire for you this time. But don't be a slacker all your life, Sylvia. A woman who won't cook for her man—well, is there any law that he shall continue to provide for her?"

She got to her feet unsteadily.

"I don't know how to make coffee," she said.

"I'll teach you. Here, open the canister and measure a heaping spoonful for each cup and one for the pot. We'll want two cups apiece. Now for the bacon. Don't scorch it. I'll cook the trout. I can't have 'em spoiled."

But she did scorch the bacon, which was a cardinal sin in cooking, as he informed her at once. She had scorched her fingers, too, but of this she said nothing. But the coffee was black and strong, the trout delicious. Sylvia begrudged her own appetite and the fact that much of her weariness had fallen After the meal, Mattison stretched himself before the fire and smoked while he told her tales of the north country before he had found copper on the hills.

The next day was better; Sylvia did not burn the bacon, and she learned to roast eggs by wrapping them in wet paper and cooking them under hot ashes—a method, so her husband informed her, far superior to boiling them in the coffeepot.

At the end of the fourth day, she had almost forgotten Wenona and, if Mattison had once held out his arms, she would have gone straight into them. But that contingency seemed far from Mattison's thought. That night they

sat in silence listening to the tinkling of a myriad little waterfalls. A mist had gathered, and the star points vanished one by one behind the creeping veil.

As the darkness increased, the firelight cast uncanny shadows. Mattison threw on a fresh armful of pine and sagebrush. The blaze flared up, then sputtered ominously.

"Bad weather," he said. "I'm sorry now we didn't make the ranch house down yonder in the valley."

He looked up at the blackness overhead. Rolling, racing billows boiled up from the north; in the west, a red glow traced a sinister line along the horizon. An icy sliver struck his face. With an exclamation, he caught up the blankets and threw them around her.

The wind, swirling down, almost wrenched them from her grasp. With a thunderous crash and roar the hailstorm was on.

In the instant of terror, Sylvia obeyed her first impulse. With the hood over her face, she burrowed into the rough tweed of Mattison's sleeve. His arm closed around her. As she huddled against him, hot, scalding tears came into her eyes, hot sobs wrenched her throat.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "Keep your face down. It's nothing much. Only it's going to be devilish cold when the storm's over."

He spoke reassuringly, but there was no tenderness in his tone. His matter-of-fact speech checked the misery in her throat. Still his hold tightened around her, and though she did not misinterpret the movement, she relaxed until she lay comfortably in the hollow of his arms.

"You're as limp as a rag," he said cuttingly. "One would think you hadn't any spine."

She stiffened as if an electric shock had vitalized her. The next moment she was out of his arms, with the space of the blackened fire between. She heard him laugh then; she sensed that he was groping to find her. She evaded him breathlessly. The hail still pattered at intervals, but a blaze leaped up suddenly and revealed the outline of her figure, He caught her wrists and drew her to him.

"Kiss me! I almost believe you want to!"

"No!" she said. "I shall never kiss

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you again!"
"We shall see about that!" he re-

"We shall see about that!" he returned, and kissed her promptly, not once, but a dozen times. Then he dropped her wrists abruptly. "The taste of Sodom apples!" he muttered.

Long after Mattison's breathing had become rhythmic, Sylvia lay cold and shivering, staring at the stars that had come out over the valley. She had submitted to Mattison's outrageous treatment of her too long. She had humiliated herself in her own eyes and in his, and the shame of it filled her with a loathing of herself and the way she had come to him. She had deceived him in not being frank with him about Delavan. But she had not wanted to lose him, and so she had kept silence. And she had not cared for him then in the degree that she had come to care for him since.

Her eyes were somber as she went about preparations for the morning meal. Mattison was conscious of the change in her. They ate in comparative silence. In silence they rode along the homeward trail. At noon they made camp among the hills on the high plateau of Eagle Butte. After the rather scanty noon meal, Mattison stretched himself along the edge of the plateau. Below, a sheer thousand feet, the river ran; the only break in the precipitous wall was a narrow ledge where the late columbine flung its fairy bloom and dumps of scrub pine clung in the pockets of meager soil. Mattison leaned on his elbow; with his free hand he shied a pebble over the wall.

"You'll never hear it fall," he said.
"It's like the silent, insignificant progress of man from the cradle to the grave." And he dropped another into the depths below.

"Don't!" she cried sharply, for his poise on the very verge of the height

was terrifying.

He looked at her from under the brim of his hat—a long, inclusive gaze.

"If I should fall, my will's made; its specifications are very generous—under the circumstances. Perhaps you may resent the clause regarding any possibility of a second marriage——"

Her eyes flashed; then as suddenly

their fire was snapped out.

"I wish you wouldn't lie so close to the edge," she said sharply, for a bit of earth had broken away at some movement of his body and now went slipping down the face of the cliff.

But he shied another stone, with a deliberate motion of finger and thumb.

"Sylvia," he said slowly, "to begin with, you had what we call 'the makings' in you. If you'd been born a prairie child, what a woman you'd have been! But, instead, your soul was hobbled and crippled like a Mongol woman's feet. You've got to limp through life missing the free paths. And instead of wanting a man, by God, you wanted a limpet like Delavan, a bloodsucker, trained ape a wouldn't work for you nor steal for you, but turned you down because you both had 'expensive tastes!' And I'm glad you had spunk enough to turn the trick on him, even if I was the joker. I'd never been considered an easy mark. How did you do it?"

"It was not so difficult. You were 'easy,' Eugene, and that's the truth."

She got up, brushing the crumbs from her skirt. With a sudden upflash of emotion, Mattison sprang to his feet—to feel the earth give under him with a lurch and a jar. He felt himself slipping and caught at the scrub bush, but

under the weight of his body, the bush snapped. For a moment he clung, clutching at the crumbling shale. Then his hold failed him, and he plunged downward into the remorseless depths.

The greatest shock to him was in finding that he lived, after the seemingly interminable descent that had taken, after all, but a few seconds. He realized that he had caught on the scrub pine that overhung the ledge and so dropped down gently enough on the shelf. As it was, he was bruised and shaken. He leaned against the wall and stared at the river tumbling over the jagged rocks beneath. Sylvia's voice came down to him. He looked up dizzily. She was leaning over the edge above.

"Eugene! Eugene!"
He waved his hand.

"I'm all right. Don't worry. Get back or you'll be coming down to keep

me company."

She disappeared from the brink. He wondered what she was doing; perhaps she had fainted. But instead she had run to untie the rope from Mattison's saddle. But it was too short by many feet, and she unbuckled the saddle girths and spliced the rope with them. She ran back to the edge of the cliff and called to her husband as she lowered the rope. To her dismay, it still swung high above Mattison's grasp.

His expression, as he looked up and comprehended her purpose, was peculiar, and if she could have seen it, it would have puzzled her. He caught the

sob in her words:

"I shall have to go to the ranch for

help."

"All right," he said after a pause.
"But there's a cloud over yonder, and
I'd not keep a foothold long after the
wind and rain came down the cañon."

She drew the rope up; she was sick with fear for him and terror at the depths below her. Her head swam and a pulsing mist danced before her eye.

Only a few more yards— Why,
there were the blankets!

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With Mattison's hunting knife, she cut the blankets into strips and knotted them, cutting them as narrow as she dared. She joined these to the length of rope and paid it out over the cliff

-and again it fell short.

The cloud was rising over the mountain like a greenish pall. Already the sun had slid behind the sinister vapor, Sylvia was cold and shaking with a dumb terror. But her thoughts flew wildly here and yonder, and suddenly. with a little cry that was half relief. she stripped off her stout corduror skirt and began tearing and cutting at the breadths. It was terribly stupid in her not to have thought of it before She stood up tall and slim, clad in jacket and silk shirt and black silk knickerbockers. Having tested each knot with frantic haste, she tied one end to the stout pine under whose shade she had rested and, lying down, let the lengths down again. Mattison grasped the

"Tie the rope around you. I'll haul

you up," she said.

He shouted something, but the wind caught his voice and whirled the words away down the great flue of the canon. But when she had reiterated her command, she caught at his next words—that his weight would draw her over the edge.

"The tree!" she said, and he got the words, "a brace." She saw then that he was fastening the rope around his

body.

Sylvia ran back to the tree and braced

herself against it.

Kneeling, she drew on the rope. With her first effort, loose shale and rock went tumbling down. Her heart almost died in her, but again she made tension hand over hand. Mattison's weight tearing, it seemed, her arms from their sockets.

Hand over hand, and always that incessant shower of loose stones when the rope bit into the edge of the cliff. Through her gloves, the rope's rough surface tore at her hands. It seemed to Sylvia that hours went by, marked by that terrifyingly slow intake of the rope. A dull pain shot through her chest; the muscles of her arms cramped and clamored for a moment's surcease from the misery dragging at them. But her grip did not slacken; her teeth, clenched on her under lip, left a red stain there.

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Then, quite suddenly, Mattison's head appeared at the level of the cliff: he had helped her by coming up hand Sylvia's heart gave one over hand. great thud and her muscles went weak as water. His cry rang out:

"Hold, Sylvia! Another minute!" His voice recalled her. Her effort, exerted with his own, brought him well over the edge onto firm ground. crawled forward and lay on his back, nursing his bleeding hands.

"It was bully of you to pull me up,"

he said in a queer voice.

She turned quickly, her head bent so that he could not see her face. Untying the saddle girths, she fastened her own in place. Mattison got up. «He leaned against the tree, looking at her. His lids were half shut and he was

"Mattison's squaw heap good squaw

sometimes. Learn fast."

She had his saddle girth in her hand and, as he spoke, she dropped it as if a

snake had bitten her.

"It was bully of you," he said, "because you didn't know that I was in no danger at all there on the ledge. There's a perfectly good path from that ledge around the butte to the other

For a moment she looked at him blankly. Then she looked down at her hands, where bruise and weal stood out. Then she lifted her eyes, and they were the eyes of the cave woman that looked into his own.

The next moment she had swung into her saddle and sent the roan clatter-

ing down the trail.

Mattison and the cow pony followed fast, but not until they were in sight of the ranch house did they overtake the roan. The storm of rain had broken; its ice-cold torrents had drenched both to the skin. Sylvia's wet garments clung to her; she was chilled to the marrow and aching with the numb misery of disillusionment and despair. She did not turn her head when her husband rode flank to flank with her.

"Sylvia," he said, leaning to her, "I love to think of the way you think you are hating me now. Don't you know all real love is half hate, anyhow?"

She made no reply.

He lifted her from the saddle; instead of setting her on her feet, he carried her straight on up the steps into the hall. Here he set her down and caught a cape from the rack to fling about her.

"I guess in this last try-out, I've overdone the troglodyte business a bit. But I've proven that, after all, under your softness you had the 'makings.' didn't think my instinct could lead me wrong. Pretty soon I shall get round to believing that you did love me—in your way. You're splendid when you look like that. Kiss me!"

As he bent his head to touch her lips, she struck him a stinging blow with her open palm. As he recoiled, wrenched loose from him and fled up the stair.

At her door, she paused involuntarily, for Sandy's booming voice filled the hall:

"'Genie! Say, 'Genie! Wenona's gone with Yellow Horse and taken the kid with her!"

She did not wait for her husband's reply. The next moment she had locked herself in her room. But a few minutes later she heard the whir of the car, and she guessed that her husband had gone out on the trail of the recalcitrant Wenona.

She bathed and dressed with precision as if for a journey-and as deftly as her bruised hands would permit. But scalding tears ran down her cheeks, tears of self-pity and passionate resent-When her husband had hung, as she had believed, in imminent peril on the face of the cliff, she had forgiven him all his treatment of her-and she had forgotten Wenona. But now it all rushed back upon her; she knew now that her first instincts had been correct-he was lawless and without scruple. When the veneer of civilization was scratched, there was the raw brute underneath that found its fitting complement in its savage mate, Wenona.

She flung open her wardrobe door and began tossing out the clothes. She felt that she could not remain another hour in Mattison's house. She packed her suit cases hurriedly. Mrs. Hobbs brought up a pot of scalding hot tea—an Englishwoman's panacea alike for an empty stomach and a broken heart. Sylvia drank hers while she studied the time-tables. The first train East would not leave Sago till two-forty-five in the morning.

The sound of a car presently sent her heart thumping into her throat. But it was only the young doctor from Sago, stopping by to see Sandy. A daring inspiration came to Sylvia. She went down to the living room, after carefully removing all traces of tears.

"I've had a telegram," she said, "and as Mr. Mattison is out with our car, I wonder if you would mind if I went into Sago with you? I've some shopping to do and then I must hurry East."

The young doctor was sympathetic and eager to oblige. Sylvia thought it an inspiration cleverly directed. There would now be no chance of embarrassing good-bys. She never once reflected upon the possibility of meeting Mattison in Sago.

The young doctor, having seen Mrs. Mattison to the door of the "hotel," strolled into the saloon. Mattison was there, walking impatiently to and fro, his hands in his pockets.

"Hello!" the doctor said. "I've just brought Mrs. Mattison over. She's had a telegram calling her East."

Mattison stared at him a moment. Then he hurried out.

Sylvia knew his step in the hall. She had only time to dry her eyes before he came in. His face had lost some of its color.

"Where are you going?" he said quickly.

"Where should I be going?" she retorted coldly.

"Into my arms. Why, don't you know I'd never on earth give you up?" He caught her shoulders; she felt that he was trembling.

"What does one squaw more or less matter to you?" she said bitterly.

He winced and flushed.

"Oh, I deserve it all! And speaking of squaws, that Wenona got away—and the buck and the kid with her. Took the northbound for Canada about ten minutes before we got here. Good riddance, but I did my best, since I'd promised old Dugan to look after her. But she was Indian to the bone—the kid, too. But they've got nothing to do with us."

Some peculiar quality in her expression led him to look more closely into her eyes.

"Who—who was Dugan?" she said.
"Dugan!" His surprise was plain.
"Why, the kid's daddy—Wenona's husband—my old mining pardner. Why,

"The child's eyes were blue," she said defensively, "like—like—"

Mattison took her chin in his palm

and lifted her face. Her lids quivered; a tear ran down her face.

"You thought the kid was mine?" She nodded, wordless.

"Didn't I tell you I was a one-woman man? And you are my woman. Sylvia, you weren't jealous of an Indian squaw?"

She did not reply. Instead, she huddled against him and wept into his sleeve. "Sylvia," he said after a pause, "honestly, I believe that you love me!"

"I do! I did! Except when I hate you!"

He laughed and held her closer.

"It may surprise you to know that from now on I'm going to be civilized."

"Please do!" But as she lifted her lips for his kiss, she added as an after-thought: "But not too civilized, Eugene!"



# **SPENDERS**

HAVE told the stars I love you— My lips to the shining sea, I have whispered the wild white magic That masters the heart in me.

The west wind has hurried tidings To the pine-swept land I know; And its wild rose blushes deeper, Its frost flowers lightlier blow.

(No wild rose asks, "Will you love me If I make the roadways sweet?" No green wave barters for rapture Before it dies at your feet.)

All thriftless spenders of beauty— Sod, sea, the night sky afar— Know my love, that is free as flowers, That burns like a deathless star.

To the horde of cold-eyed people
With the haggling heart and hand,
I might tell my love a thousand years—
They would not understand.

MARGUERITE MOOERS MARSHALL.



The elderly Duchess of Ashminster, one fine spring day, wakes up to the fact that she is bored with life in her narrow, conventional circle, and is yearning for a taste of freedom and adventure. That very night, her chance comes. One of her tenants, who feels that he has been unjustly treated, climbs in at her window to present his case to her personally. As he is leaving by the same way, his wrongs having been righted, he slips and falls with a cry. The duchess hurries down into the garden to see if he has been hurt, and not finding him there, continues her search out into the street. When she returns, she finds the garden gate locked. Acting upon a sudden impulse, she seizes the opportunity to set forth on a ramble through London unattended.

OST sensations are commonplace. No matter how serious or how ludicrous they may be, nearly everybody has had them or will have them at some time or other. Though at first sight it seems unlikely, there are few among us who do not know what it feels like to fall down a cliff, to be pursued by a runaway locomotive, or to find oneself walking insouciantly in some highly populous and fashionable district clad in a bath towel. Where reality fails, dreams step in to supply the deficiency.

But even in dreamland the sensations of a perfectly respectable bona-fide duchess, with a fat rent roll, goodness knows how many ducal residences, and an easy conscience, wandering the streets of London in the early hours of a spring morning, are probably unique.

The duchess thrilled to it all. The night air tasted like wine. She felt like an elderly fairy princess in an enchanted land. Quite by accident, she wandered into Berkeley Square and looked up at Sir John O'Neill's lightless windows and thought tenderly of bygone days and of things that might so well have happened and didn't. She thought of Colonel Magree and his hopeless devotion for that inconsolable widow, Mary Cochrane. It was all beautifully sad. The duchess sighed and glowed with romance.

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And then presently she grew tired, and with fatigue came the knowledge that she was hopelessly lost. Neither circumstance was surprising. The duchess had never walked anywhere in her life. Her secretary knew her appointments and told the butler, and the butler told James, and James told Charles, the head coachman; and between them all they produced her at her destination with the punctuality of princes. But the duchess herself was entirely passive and only woke up when

it was incumbent upon her to say something pleasant and interested.

And now she was lost.

She looked about her helplessly. The glamour of her adventure had already begun to fade, and when a policeman loomed up under the lamplight, the duchess hailed him as an ally. She had always liked policemen. From the featureless mass of the lower orders, they stood out as a peculiarly agreeable race, to be classed with gamekeepers, butlers, and other pillars of the aristocracy. The way they held up the traffic for her victoria had often aroused her appreciation. It occurred to her now that this particular specimen might be intrusted with the unusual situation. He might even devise some unostentatious, plausible return to civilization. For the duchess, to put it briefly, had had enough.

But it was the policeman who spoke

first.

"Look 'ere," he said. "I've 'ad my eye on you. Wotcher up to, eh?"

The duchess smiled. She would have been more amused if she had been less tired.

"It's a little difficult to explain," she began pleasantly. "You see, officer, it's like this—"

"No gas, now. We don't want no loafin' about 'ere. You move on."

"But, my dear, good man-" began the duchess.

"An' I don't want no cheek, neither. You'll be gettin' yourself into trouble, you will. If you ain't in trouble already," he added darkly.

The duchess restrained her natural annoyance with an effort.

"You're making an absurd mistake," she began. "If you knew who I am..."

"Seems to me I do know." He peered under her shawl. The light was dim, and though the duchess did now know it, she was not looking her best. The wind had blown her hair into un-

graceful wisps and the aristocratic nose was red with cold. "Seen your face somewhere, I 'ave," the constable reflected.

"Of course you have," said the duchess, somewhat mollified.

The constable appeared to be overcome with heavy official mirth.

"Of course I 'ave! Thames Police Court, it was. Drunk an' disorderly. A disgrace to your sex—that's wot Sir John called you. A month without the option. 'Iggins was the name. Not much I forgets."

"So it seems," said the duchess, with bitter sarcasm. "Only, as it happens, I have never been before a magistrate in my life. Nor am I given to loafing, as you call it. Nor is my name Higgins. My name is Elizabeth—"

"Mary Jane, for all I care," was the rude interruption. "All I knows is a respectable woman don't wander about the streets at one in the morning, that's wot I knows."

The duchess felt the accusation acutely and faltered under the constable's grim disapproval.

"Maybe you've been up to mischief already," he continued. "Shouldn't wonder if you're wanted already."

This also being painfully near the truth, the duchess remained speechless. The constable hunched his shoulders.

"You take my advice," he said. "You move on."

The duchess moved on. She felt instinctively that further conversation with such a ridiculous individual could serve no good purpose, and the prospect of explanations at a police court and the subsequent headlines in the morning papers lent her tired feet wings. She did not stop, in fact, till chance brought her to the Thames Embankment, where, having ascertained that there was no policeman in sight, she leaned exhaustedly against the parapet and contemplated the gaunt outlines of the wharves opposite and the chill

blackness of the water at her feet. She had never seen the river from that point of view before, and it completed her depression. She saw her folly in all its completeness. She was an elderly duchess and there was no escaping the fact. Nor did she want to escape; the impulse toward freedom and youth had evaporated. She felt like a canary that has begun to realize the very bitter sweetness of its emancipation and the delights of the cage it has so rashly forsaken.

Only, the duchess had one advantage over the canary—she could call a taxi and drive back. She made up her mind that she would call the very first one that passed. She was going home—back to the pompous house and the seven-course dinner—if any of it could be procured at such an ungodly hour—back to James and his ten satellites, back to the Louis XVI. bed, with its twentieth-century spring mattress, back to the shelf where reposed other elderly folk, that faithful knight Sir John O'Neill among them.

The thought of Sir John somehow

settled the matter.

And just as she had come to her decision and was framing explanations to offer James and the world generally, she heard a strange sound quite close to her. It was a very pitiful sound—very unusual to the duchess' ears—the sound of some one sobbing.

At first it seemed to come from nowhere in particular. Then the duchess, peering about her, discovered that she stood at the head of a flight of steps leading down to the river, and that on these steps, perilously near the water, was the figure of a woman. She stood so motionless that she seemed part of the shadow, but the long-drawn, monotonous sobs were undoubtedly hers.

The duchess considered her uneasily over the edge of the parapet. She had never seen anything like it before. She knew, of course, that people cried, but she had always imagined their doing so against an expensive background. She knew, too, that there were poor people—nice, tidy, respectful creatures created by Providence in order to exercise the virtue of charity among the elect. She had never visualized anything so raw, so unpleasantly crude, as this.

"Dear me, it's no business of mine,"

said the duchess mentally.

A taxi came gliding temptingly along the embankment. The duchess half raised her hand and the taxi swerved. Then, to her own disgust, the duchess turned her back on it, and with a hoot of disapproval, the jilted vehicle sailed past. The duchess stood and watched it disappear round a curve in the roadway.

"This is the beginning of senile decay," she told herself despairingly.

Then, very cautiously, for the stones were slippery, she crept down the steps and touched the heaving shoulders.

"My good creature," she began, "you mustn't—you really mustn't, you know

The woman started violently and jerked her shoulder free.

"Drat you! Leave me alone, cawn't yer?"

"But you might fall in," the duchess objected.

"Well, that's wot I'm tryin' to do, ain't it? Only I 'aven't got the bloomin' nerve."

"Dear me—how wicked to talk like that! Why, you've got a little baby, too! Don't you know you oughtn't to keep it out so late?"

The woman laughed, and the laugh had the odd effect of jarring the

duchess' spine.

"Go on! It ain't no business of yours. I don't want no savin'. You 'ook it, Mrs. Soul Snatcher."

"I know it's no business of mine," said the duchess plaintively, "and I have no desire to snatch any one's soul. Only I do wish you wouldn't cry like that. It—it upsets me. What is the matter?"

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Her question was almost irate. It is very difficult for a duchess to understand that anything can be the matter with anybody not of a certain social position, and the process of understanding was painful. Then suddenly the woman turned her head. Her face was so white that it shone through the darkness, and its expression caused the duchess another disagreeable pang.

"My good creature—" she began, and then, not liking the phrase, hastily changed it. "My dear, what has upset you? Won't you tell me? Can't I help?"

"You? Ye're a lidy, aren't yer? Lidies don't understand nothink."

"But I'm not a lady," the duchess assured her earnestly. "I'm certain I'm not. No lady would behave in the way I have done. And as to understanding—I'm positive no one could be more tired and hungry and miserable than I am. And no one," she added with increased feeling, "could be in such a predicament."

"Well, yer let me alone, anyhow."

The woman took a sudden plunge forward. The duchess stretched out an involuntary hand and clutched her. The effect was startlingly instantaneous. The woman stopped short and stared down at the hand on her arm.

"My!" she whispered. "Where'd yer get them from?"

The duchess followed her companion's gaze. Then, too late, she caught the glitter of the three half-hoop diamond rings on her third finger. She wrenched her hand free and hid it under her cloak. Her heart seemed to stand still. Her knees shook. She had played at being robbed and murdered, and now this might be bitter reality. She was alone, helpless, at the water's edge. An inspiration, born of her deadly peril, flashed across her.

"Paste," she fluttered, "only paste, of course."

The woman laughed her short, angry laugh and crouched down on the steps with her back to the damp wall.

"Don't yer try kiddin' me," she said.
"I knows the goods when I sees 'em.
Lawks!" She peered up curiously into
the duchess' face. "Lawks! I'd never
have thought yer was that sort!"

"Really not?" said the duchess, a little hurt. She did not want to be recognized, but still she had always flattered herself that she looked what she was. "Well, I am," she added goodnaturedly.

"An' yer looks as honest as a biby!"
The woman had ceased crying. She seemed overwhelmed—almost awestruck. "Honest as a biby!" she repeated, and then, in a hoarse whisper, "Where'd yer pinch 'em from?"

"I-I beg your pardon?"

"Garn! I won't give yer away! Honor bright! Who'd they belong to? Some swell, I bet."

"Yes—I suppose so—I mean—they belong to a—a sort of duchess."

"Well, I never!" Light seemed to break. "Lidy's maid—that's wot makes yer speak refined like. Now I knows where I am."

It was a statement, not a question, and the duchess felt incapable of controversy. She sat down helplessly on the dank step and defied rheumatism. She had a curious, baffled feeling, as if she were being tied up into inextricable knots or smothered in a nightmare tangle of worsted. There was evidently some horrible mistake, but not one she could deal with effectively. So she said nothing, and the woman continued to nurse her sleeping child and stare with unabated interest.

"Never done much of this sort of thing before, 'ave yer, now?" she asked.

"Never," said the duchess very earnestly. "Never in my life."

"Thought not. Any one could see that. Got a hanky."

"I have a handkerchief—certainly I have."

"'And it over. Lor', you want lookin' after, you do!" Swiftly, so skillfully that the duchess had no time to
protest, the three rings were removed,
tied up in the delicate cambric handkerchief, and handed back. "'Ide 'em
somewhere in yer dress. Why, if any
one was to see 'em, they'd cop yer before yer could say Jack Robinson."

"Dear me, I suppose they would,"
the duchess agreed.

"Of course. They'll be 'ot on yer track by now, won't they?"

"I—I don't know—I dare say—now I come to think of it."

"Well, don't yer let 'em catch yer 'ere."

The duchess positively jumped. The thought of being discovered seated on the steps of the Thames Embankment was like the touch of a red-hot needle.

"It would never, never do," she said feverishly. "There would be a terrible scandal. It would be in all the morning papers—"

"Large as life," her companion agreed. She was silent a moment, hushing the child, which had begun to whimper. "Look 'ere," she said suddenly. "I'll 'elp yer."

"You-help me?"

"Yus." She jerked her head toward the gray water sliding past into the darkness. "I meant to chuck myself in there, I did, but I'll see yer clear fust, s'help me I will. Don't yer worrit."

"But why," said the duchess slowly, "why should you want to help me?"

"'Cause ye're bein' chivvied." She said it simply, without pathos, just as a matter of fact. "I know wot that means," she added quietly. "I'm chivvied, too."

"Chivvied?" said the duchess.

She pondered on the word, consider-

ing her companion with new eyes, just as the words "hunger" and "cold" had come to have a new significance since she had been sitting, dinnerless, on the damp steps. The child was crying frefully by now, and the duchess took off her shawl. The mother accepted the offering without comment. Since the discovery of the rings, they had fallen into an odd comradeship.

"Tell me," said the duchess, "why did you want to—to throw yourself in

there?"

"'Cause of Bert," was the husky answer.

"Is Bert your husband?"

"Yus."

The duchess pondered over this, also. She remembered—vaguely—that in the lower classes husbands are not always all they should be. She approached the subject with tactful caution.

"Perhaps he isn't kind to you, is that

it?"

"'E's a hangel," was the fervent answer. The woman lifted her head, and the duchess realized for the first time how young she was and how pretty in her anæmic, careworn way. "There ain't another like 'im," she said proudly. "An hangel, that's 'im."

The duchess suppressed surprise. The idea of an angel called Bert, and doubtless without an aspirate attached to the name, was new to her. Practically, if not theoretically, angels had never been less than middle class in the duchess' conception of heaven. And they were all gentlemen.

"Then I'm afraid I don't understand," she persisted at length. "If your husband is an angel, why are you unhappy?"

The girl was crying again, but quietly now, with the plaintive gentleness of

an exhausted child.

"Bert 'ad lost 'is job," she said. "We 'adn't 'ad enough to eat an' the kid was dyin', an' Bert, 'e nearly went off 'is dot. An' 'e took somethin'—'arf a

crown's worth of somethin' that wasn't 'is—an' they shut 'im up for a month. An' afterward they never gave 'im a chance. Every job 'e got, some one'd come along an' split on 'im. An' then them p'lice!" She tossed her head with angry defiance. "I 'ates the lot of 'em!"

"I dare say," the duchess agreed feelingly. "I don't care for them myself

as much as I did."

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"They wouldn't let 'im be honest," the girl went on between her teeth. "They chivvied 'im, an' 'e went wrong again. 'E 'ad to." She laid her thin hand on the duchess' arm, and her voice sank to a whisper. "An' now 'e's gone after a big crib—a place in Berkeley Square, where there's fine silver. 'E wouldn't listen to me, though I went down on my knees to 'im. We'd gone two days without a bite an' 'e was desperate. 'E's got a soft 'eart, 'as Bert, an' 'e couldn't bear to see me an' the kid starve. That's why I was goin'—in there."

She pointed to the black waters at their feet, and the duchess shuddered. But she was thinking fast. Sir John O'Neill's house was in Berkeley Square. Sir John's silver was famous. The duchess' elderly heart beat with an almost youthful passion of adventure.

"Still, I don't quite understand," she said gently. "How would that help—your going in there?"

The girl's head sank.

"Then 'e'd be free," she muttered.
"E wouldn't 'ave us two tied round 'is neck. 'E'd be able to go right away an' start fresh. That's wot 'e wants. It's killin' 'im—this life—it is. 'E ain't made for it."

"I shouldn't think any one was made for it," the duchess declared grimly.

They were both silent for a minute. Then the girl turned to her with an awkward, questioning movement.

"You're right," she said. "Nobody wants to go wrong. Wot yer do it for? Yer don't look 'ungry."

"Don't I?" said the duchess.

"Well, not chronic like. You 'ad a soft place. Wot made yer bolt?"

The duchess smiled dreamily to her-

"My dear," she said, "I was tired of my soft place. It was making me an old, old woman before my time. And before I got too old, I wanted to see what life was like—to really live once and be young again for the last time. Perhaps you won't understand—but it was hunger of a kind."

The girl bent forward.

"But yer ain't old," she said slowly.
"Yer 'air's white, but yer face is young—young like some one wots never grown up. If yer was to dye yer 'air, nobody wouldn't know yer was old at all." A sudden inspiration seemed to seize her. "My," she exclaimed, with a suppressed laugh of excitement, "yer come 'ome with me! I've got a pal who'll dye it for yer. Then no one won't ever know. No one won't recognize yer. Yer'll be able to get clear of 'em all—an'—an' start fresh. Think of that, now!"

They stood up facing each other. It was no use the duchess telling herself that she was mad. The excitement was contagious. She thrilled with it.

"Why shouldn't I?" she demanded of accusing reason. "Why shouldn't we

start afresh-all of us."

"Why not? 'Ere, come along 'fore they catch us." She started up the steps and then turned. "My name's Sal— Sal Jakes," she said. "Wot's yer's?"

"Mine? Oh-Elizabeth-just Eliza-

beth."

"Elizabeth? Lizzy—a werry nice name, too. Well, come along, Lizzy." They went up the steps—arm in arm.

#### II.

Doctor Barclay folded up his stethoscope and placed it neatly in its case. Considering his youth, his bedside manner was quite wonderful—at once

authoritative and soothing, a model for

all Harley Street.

His present patient, however, was not in bed, but ensconced comfortably in a library chair before a rather unnecessarily blazing fire. He was an elderly gentleman with a bald head and a fierce military mustache and a brick-red complexion, the latter accentuated by a port-wine-colored dressing gown of severe character. He looked depressed, and Doctor Barclay tapped him on the shoulder with that familiar air of professional optimism which is calculated to give even the journey across the Styx the aspect of a pleasure outing.

"There's nothing seriously wrong, colonel. All you have to do is to go easy. Remember your years. Don't try and do things you can't do. horsy metaphor, your hunting days are over. No more hedges and ditches and long cross-country runs. But in the park, now-a nice, easy canter, eh? Why, that old heart of yours'll last years."

"Thanks," said the colonel sourly.

"Not at all. But go easy. No excitements. When you are on the point of losing your temper-such things do happen to retired military men, I believe-or feel yourself getting out of hand-just count up to four. It'll save you no end of wear and tear. Try it."

"No good at arithmetic," said the

colonel, with grim humor.

Barclay laughed heartily-appreciation of his patients' jokes was one of his professional secrets-and presently took himself and his soothing geniality to his next appointment. As the street door banged, Colonel Magree lifted himself with prodigious care out of his chair and stretched himself cautiously. as if not quite certain that all his limbs were in their proper place.

"Never knew it was as bad as all

that," he muttered, "never,"

He went over to a drawer in an antique Japanese cupboard and took out a leather case, with which he returned to his place by the fireside. The case contained two photographs-one of a young and charmingly dressed girl in the fashion of forty years ago, the other of a widow, tall and slender and poignantly sad in her graceful weeds. The colonel shook his head.

"An old, old man, Mary!" he said under his breath. "A decrepit old man fit for the scrap heap. No more hedges and ditches, dear, no more cross-country rides-only sedate canters in the

park. An old, old man!"

He sighed deeply and shook his head, and presently passed on from his melancholy reflections into a pleasant after-

breakfast doze.

In the midst of it, the telephone raised its brazen, unmodulated voice in a shriek that jerked the colonel vioback wakefulness. to clenched his fist and was about to shake it, but remembered and counted four with great solemnity, by which time the offending instrument had become insistent. The colonel dementedly snatched off the receiver.

"Hello! Hello! What the devil's the matter? Why can't you ring quietly? One-two-three-four-No, that's not my number. A call from a call office? Yes-you've got it. Hello-speak up, can't you? Marymy dear girl-yes-of course I'm here. You know I am whenever you want me. I wasn't angry. I thought it was the telephone girl wanting to tell me I was the wrong number. In trouble? Why, come round at once. On your way? Of course I'm up-been up hours. Right!"

Colonel Magree hung up the receiver and rang the bell. The startled manservant, also of elderly, martial aspect, who answered the summons with commendable promptitude, found his master crimson with sternly controlled pas-

"Didn't you hear? Griffins, you're

getting old and useless like the rest of us. My coat—my morning coat—the one just back from the tailor's. And get flowers—fill the place with flowers. There aren't any? Well, get them at once! For pity's sake, show some gumption, Griffins!"

"If you please, sir, there's a lady to

see you-Mrs. Cochrane."

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"Confound it! How the devil did she get here in that time?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Of course you don't! My coat-my coat, man!"

But it was too late. Behind the perturbed Griffins, a tall black-clad figure had already made its appearance, and Colonel Magree writhed back hastily into the claret dressing gown. Griffins, murmuring incoherencies, discreetly withdrew.

The colonel gulped down his discomfiture.

"Mrs. Cochrane—my dear Mary—you must have taken wings. I wasn't expecting you so soon. My man's an ass. If you'd given me another minute—"

"I was at the call office just round the corner," Mrs. Cochrane interrupted. "As soon as I heard you were up, I came round. I couldn't wait. It's a most terrible business."

She sank into the colonel's chair and pushed back the becoming veil which had added an additional melancholy charm to her delicate features. Altogether—though to be sure she did not know it—widow's weeds as made in Bond Street became her mightily. The colonel, having given a last anxious glance at the coat lying on the back of her chair, where its immaculate folds were undergoing a rapid process of destruction, regarded his visitor with a kind of religious awe.

"If only you'd have given me another minute!" he repeated dolefully. "Then I'd have had things decent for you. A

careless, lonely old bachelor's rooms

"Oh, my dear colonel!" Mrs. Cochrane lifted her beautiful hand in a gesture of nervous impatience. "What does it matter? Do you think I've defied convention in order to be fêted? Haven't you heard—don't you know what's happened?"

"No, I don't. What has happened?"
"The duchess—the duchess has dis-

appeared."

Colonel Magree counted to four and then sat down on the nearest chair. He tried to keep his mind fixed on something else, but without conspicuous success.

"Disappeared?" he echoed stupidly.

Mrs. Cochrane nodded.

"It's awful. Angela rang me up this morning. It's in all the papers—though we're trying to keep the thing quiet. The police have been at it all night—with their usual result—nothing. We—we daren't think what has happened. Angela has just gone round to see some swell detective or other, and then she is coming on here. We felt you might help."

"When, in Heaven's name, was she

seen last? What happened?"

Mrs. Cochrane shook her head help-

lessly

"We don't know what happened. Angela saw her last—just as she came back from the wedding. It seems that Angela annoyed her—some remark about her age, I think it was—and she went and shut herself up in her boudoir. When her maids came to dress her for dinner, they heard a man's voice and then a crash and a smothered scream. The door was locked. They had to get a manservant to break the lock. Then it was too late. The window stood open—the duchess had vanished."

"Good heavens!"

"They searched the garden," Mrs. Cochrane went on feverishly. "There

was blood on the pavement beneath the window and the side door was unlocked. Nothing else was found and—and nothing else has been found."

"Good heavens!" the colonel repeated. He half rose and then firmly sat down again, and the space of four slowly counted seconds elapsed before he questioned huskily: "I suppose—Lady Angela—— Frightful state of mind, eh?"

Mrs. Cochrane stiffened with uncon-

trollable disapproval.

"I don't know. I confess she puzzles—and—and rather shocks me. She insists that her mother was 'up to something.' Those are her very words. And you know, Douglas, I cannot conceive Elizabeth being—being 'up to something.' Can you?"

"Certainly not! A disgraceful idea!" Mrs. Cochrane nodded in despairing

agreement.

"That's what I think. But Angela is so painfully modern. No seriousness, and no respect for anything or anybody. A rough, unsensitive generation!"

Magree nodded.

"The world has changed," he growled. "Not for the better, I fear, not for the better."

They were both silent for a moment, then simultaneously they looked up and their eyes met.

"O'Neill-does he know?"

"We haven't told him—we didn't dare. He—he isn't young any more. We were afraid of the shock. Poor Sir John—he was so devoted—so unselfishly devoted! I always think of Cyrano de Bergerac and Don Quixote and Sir Philip Sydney and other dear, romantic people like that when I see him."

"And why?" demanded the colonel unreasonably incensed. "Because he's as thin as a maypole, because he will wear old-fashioned clothes, because his hair curls and he has brown melancholy eyes! It's sickening! Other people," he went on, with gloomy significance, "are every bit as chock-full of romance and all that stuff, every bit as devoted, but because they're stout and bald, they are passed over, forgotten, slighted. Women can't see below the surface, and—and it's a damned shame!"

"Colonel!"

"Well, it is," he insisted sullenly.

The conversation languished. The colonel smoldered over his grievance, and Mrs. Cochrane sighed and stared at the carpet. It was evident that the tragic disappearance of the duchess had faded into the background, at any rate for the time being. Presently Mrs. Cochrane's eyes fell on a leather photograph case lying on the floor and she picked it up. The silence deepened—grew heavy with impending catastrophe. The colonel's face was a shade redder when his visitor turned her indignant attention to him.

"Colonel-who gave you these?"

He was a soldier and had fought in many a desperate battle without a tremor, and now he returned her glance with reckless defiance.

"You did."

"I did nothing of the sort."

He laughed bitterly.

"One you did, anyhow. Years ago. I dare say you have forgotten. Women do forget, it seems."

Mary Cochrane flushed faintly.

"And the other?"

"I stole," he admitted brazenly.

"That was very wrong." The colonel muttered to the effect that he didn't care a damn, and she went on with sad disapproval: "And very unkind. It was unkind to confront youth with old age—the has-been with the what-is."

"You are lovelier than you ever were," the colonel declared passionately. "The what-is is a hundred times more beautiful than the has-been."

Mrs. Cochrane avoided his eyes.

"I didn't ask for flattery. Won't you understand once and for all that I am an old woman, not so much in years as in feeling? All that makes for youth—all that I cared for—is dead, has been in the grave these many years. Surely I don't need to tell you that."

"No, you don't," the colonel retorted rudely. "I haven't had much chance

to forget it."

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He stalked about the room, counting under his breath, and finally came back and stood beside her chair. His tone was now beautifully gentle and resigned.

"Mary, don't be angry with me. And let me keep these photographs. It may not be for so very long now."

"What do you mean?" she demanded

hurriedly.

He sighed.

"I didn't mean to tell you. It's another of those beastly attacks. I had young Barclay round this morning. It's the heart again—might stop any moment. A shock—any unusual exertion might—"

"Douglas!"

"There's nothing to fret about," he went on uncomplainingly. "I've had my day. I'm an old man. It's not as if any one would miss me. No wife—no child——"

"Douglas-is that all our friendship

means to you?"

"Friendship!" he exclaimed, with tragic contempt. "Friendship! Haven't you just said that all you cared for was in the grave?"

"Oh, but—I didn't mean——" she

began tremulously.

But what she did or did not mean was fated not to be elucidated. The door opened suddenly, admitting a young lady whose appearance was heroically prepossessing in the face of ostentatiously slapdash and artistic apparel. She entered unannounced, having left the panting Griffins well behind in the race up the stairs.

"I just ran for all I was worth," she explained breathlessly. "They've got a clew—I don't know what yet—but they're going to phone us up here. And I passed O'Neill on the way. He's coming straight here and he must have heard, because he looks as if he were going to have ten fits. Poor old josser!"

"Really, my dear child-" Mrs.

Cochrane began.

The Lady Angela flopped exhaustedly into the nearest chair. It must be admitted that, as a duchess' daughter, she was not a conspicuous success.

"You old fogies take things so seriously," she said. "I know mother's only

been up to a lark."

"Can you imagine your mother being up to a lark?" the colonel asked coldly.

"Oh, I don't know. I have moods, you know, that make me prepared for anything in mother."

Mrs. Cochrane wrung her hands.

"And, anyhow, we've got to help Sir John. We must encourage him to hope for the best. His state of mind must be terrible. At least, he cares—"

"Always was keen on mother," the Lady Angela agreed composedly. "I didn't know one could be so keen at that

age."

The two regarded her with a stony disapproval, but further conversation was cut short by the appearance of the flustered Griffins, followed immediately by Sir John O'Neill himself. The latter stopped short on the threshold, evidently taken aback by the assembly. Though very pale and obviously perturbed, he was clad as immaculately as ever in his somewhat old-fashioned garments and looked quite romantically handsome, as Mrs. Cochrane realized. She shook her head at him with compassionate understanding.

"We've all heard," she said gently. "We're here in the hope of being of some use. We must just hope for the

best."

He took her outstretched hand and pressed it.

"It's very good of you all to take such interest," he said. "I dare say it sounds exaggerated, but really it is one of the most unpleasant things that has ever happened to me."

It was not quite what they had expected. Mrs. Cochrane was conscious of a slight chill.

"Angela takes a hopeful view," she began. "She seems to think it's a kind of practical joke——"

"Very practical, I admit," Sir John interrupted grimly. "The fellow who played it has got the laugh over me, at any rate."

He sat down and smoothed his gray hair with an aristocratic hand and stared into the fire. The three regarded him uncertainly. He was not living up to the situation. Even the Lady Angela was disappointed in him.

"The police are going to ring us up here," she remarked, by way of filling up the rather awkward silence.

Sir John laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"Much good they'll do! Why, they didn't catch the miscreant last night, I can't think. It's not as if one could carry a great, fat bundle like that through the streets without being noticed."

"Really—" Mrs. Cochrane began. The vision of Cyrano de Bergerac and Don Quixote faded. She felt incensed—almost aggrieved. "You know, I don't think you ought to talk like that."

Sir John gave her a quaint, old-fashioned bow.

"I apologize. I know I must seem quite absurdly upset. A loss like that can always be made good. Still, there were old associations attached——" He sighed deeply. "They might have gone off with anything else," he declared, "with the family jewels if they had liked, but they took the one thing

I cared for. Mercifully, there is the insurance—"

"Look here, O'Neill," Magree broke in suddenly, "I don't like your tone. It's not respectful—it's heartless."

"Why should I be respectful? I can't really break my heart over a loss of that kind, annoying and expensive though it is."

"You've no business to speak of anan old friend like that."

Sir John smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, come, colonel, one mustn't be sentimental. Spilled milk is spilled milk, and there it is."

"Brute!" said Mrs. Cochrane under her breath.

Colonel Magree counted four at a great pace and then exploded.

"I thought you were a gentleman, O'Neill," he stuttered, "and you're a cad—a—a stony-hearted scoundrel!" "Sir!"

Sir John O'Neill bounded to his feet, but before the conversation could proceed, the telephone rang frantically and Magree snatched off the receiver.

"Hello—hello—who's there? Sergeant Powell. Yes—yes. What's that? Good heavens—you don't mean—Yes, wait a minute——" He turned his blanched face to the three, who watched him with various expressions of bewilderment, dread, and placid interest. "The duchess' shawl has been found on the steps of the Thames Embankment," he said hoarsely.

Mrs. Cochrane collapsed. Sir John staggered.

"What is all this about?" he demanded. "Explain—can't you?"

"You don't deserve it," Magree retorted fiercely, "after the way you have been speaking of her grace."

"I haven't been speaking of her grace."

"Then what the devil have you been speaking of?"

"Of my silver—the silver that was

stolen last night. What-what did you

They stared at each other blankly. Sir John O'Neill steadied himself

against the back of a chair.
"For pity's sake," he pleaded, "what

has happened?"

"The duchess," began Magree very slowly, "the duchess has disappeared." "Murdered!" Mrs. Cochrane ex-

claimed brokenly.

But the Lady Angela merely stretched herself and yawned.

"What mother has been up to," she said, "goodness only knows."

### III.

It was a very harmless, ordinary-looking bottle, not at all the sort of thing likely to work miracles. Its highly colored label bore a legend to the effect that one application produced youth instantly, followed by the question, "Why look old?" and various pertinent and impertinent observations. In fact, the whole thing did not inspire confidence. Yet the miracle had been performed.

An hour before, Elizabeth, Duchess of Ashminster, had been a white-haired, delightful aristocrat of the ancien régime—the sort of person associated with lavender, soft laces, imperturbable manners, and the guillotine. And now she was a lady-of charm, it is true, but of distinctly doubtful character. It was the black hair that had done itthe glossy, raven-black hair that made the calm, aristocratic eyes vivacious an 1 the delicate, aristocratic nose piquant and the haughtily aristocratic mouth provocative. Not that she was exactly young-that was the whole charm of the thing. The idea of age was simply not applicable. She was an alluring personality-some one you had to look at two or three times and then lose your heart to

The duchess herself was shocked.

The reflection shown her by the piece of broken mirror nailed on the cracked wall of Mrs. Jakes' unsalubrious attic actually frightened her. It was as if she had lost herself in some one else—or found something in herself as unexpected as it was reprehensible. And the unchangeableness of it all was really alarming.

"Do you know," she began, "do you know, I don't think I look quite nice, somehow? Not—not respectable——"

"Nice!" Sally Jakes retorted. "Why, yer fine! 'Ansome, yer are—real 'ansome! That old duchess of yers ain't a patch on yer, I bet."

"Do you really think so?"

"I should say I do! And as to being respectable—well, yer ain't respectable, an' there ain't no good tryin' t' be what yer ain't."

The duchess inclined to demur, but just then footsteps sounded on the creaking wooden stairs, and Mrs. Jakes, with her fingers to her lips, crept to the door, which the next minute was flung open. Mrs. Jakes vanished into the gloom, and there was the sound of a sob and a convulsive embrace.

The duchess was both embarrassed and surprised. She had never associated tenderness with the lower classes. Love, for the duchess, was a restrained, gentlemanly person with a Bond Street tailor. Now it appeared that he was not at all particular either as to his company or his neighborhood.

"Dear me, they do seem fond of each other," the duchess thought. "I do hope they've not forgotten I'm here."

Quite accidentally, her thoughts drifted to Sir John; an accident which so thoroughly disconcerted her that she hastened to fix her attention sternly on her surroundings. There was so little to fix on, however, a soap box that served as a cradle being the chief item, that the effort was not successful.

"Poor, dear things!" the duchess

murmured. "It's not at all a nice place—and a soap box, too! Dear, dear!"

She found herself becoming very indignant. She was probably looking peculiarly vivacious and flighty when the couple on the landing made their appearance. Mr. Jakes proved a tall young man who, like his wife, would have been positively handsome if he had not been so thin—so harassed looking, "chivvied," as Mrs. Jakes would have expressed it. He carried a large carpenter's bag in one hand; the other arm was flung over his wife's shoulder. As he saw the stranger, he started and blanched visibly.

"Wot's that?" he asked, with a jerk

of the head.

The opening was not propitious or flattering. The duchess stared back rather haughtily, and Sally Jakes disengaged herself from her husband's arm and came forward.

"It's a new pal, Bert," she said. "A real good pal. She saved me an' the kid, she did, an' we're goin' to do 'er a good turn, 'cos she's down on 'er

luck, ain't we?"

Mr. Albert Jakes and the duchess measured each other. The former's scrutiny seemed to satisfy him. He

held out a big hand.

"I don't rightly know wot yer've done, missus," he said, "but if yer've 'elped my old girl, why, yer can count on yours trooly to the bitter hend. Shake on it."

They shook. The duchess found the process painful and was relieved when her hand was released, and Mr. Jakes turned and set his bag cautiously on the table. There was a faint metallic jingle from the interior, and the man glanced back over his shoulder and caught the duchess' startled eyes.

"Look 'ere," he said. "Ye're straight? Yer ain't goin' to play no tricks—no

peachin', d'yer 'ear?"

"Of course she's straight," Sally Jakes answered. "Why, she's in trou-

ble 'erself-up to 'er neck in it, ain't yer, Liz?"

"Oh, quite up to my neck, I should say," the duchess agreed sincerely.

Mr. Jakes appeared satisfied. He opened the bag and began slowly to unpack the contents. Mrs. Jakes crept up to him, her thin cheek against his shoulder.

"Bert-ye're safe? No one saw

yer?"

"Not that I knows of. But I 'ad an 'ell of a time—all them bloomin' bells ringin' their 'eads off. Thort I'd never get away. But I done it. Look 'ere! Beauty, eh, wot?"

It was a beauty. The duchess tried

to suppress a gasp and failed.

"Sir John's Queen Anne teapot," she said, "and the Georgian teaspoons—and his pet milk jug! Oh, my dear, good man, what have you done?"

"Done?" He replaced the teapot slowly and stared at her. "Cawn't yer see? An' wot d'yer know about Sir John's bloomin' silver, missus? Yer tell

me that?"

His wife pressed his arm gently. "Lidy's maid, Bert dear. Knows all

the nobs. Moved in the 'ighest circles, 'aven't yer, Lizzy?"

"Quite the highest," the unhappy

duchess agreed.

She sat down on the one chair and stared helplessly at the silver glitter spread out on the table before her. Mr. Albert Jakes also considered his spoils with a gloomy, meditative eye.

"Fine, ain't it?" he said. "Nuf there to get us clean out of 'ere an' give us a fresh start where they won't chivvy us. But I 'ates it. I 'ates the 'ole bloomin' thing. It's like bein' a dirty tyke—stealin' wot ain't 'is. Wot's we t'do? Just tell me that! We ain't 'ad so much as a tyke's chawnce. A tyke gets scraps chucked at 'im or 'e gets pushed into a lethal chamber an' turned off easy. But 'oo gives us scraps? We've got to live, we 'ave—that's the

law. 'Ow we live don't matter to no-body."

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He seemed to have forgotten his companions, to be addressing some invisible court of justice in which judge and jury were other than those which he had already faced to his cost. His young face was grim and old with bitteness, and there were tears on his wife's pinched white cheeks. The duchess looked from one to the other. The silver had ceased to be important. Her pity for Sir John had been ousted by another pity—the strongest, most impetuous emotion she had ever felt in all her life.

"Mr. Jakes," she said, "if you hate it—send that silver back. You shall start afresh. From now onward, I'm going to care how you live. I promise you."

"You!" He stared at her with dazed incredulity. "'Ow are yer goin' to do that, missus? Yer in trouble yerself, ain't yer?"

"Yes, I am—incredible trouble. But I can help you. I can give you enough to start afresh. Look here!" She drew out the cambric handkerchief and unknotted it with trembling fingers. "There, I give you those. They're worth hundreds."

Even in the somber twilight, the three diamond rings sparkled with an alluring promise. There was a moment's silence, which grew tense as Albert Jakes took the handkerchief and its contents to the dirty window. When he returned, a startling change had come over him. He was trembling from head to foot. He leaned across the table, the rings in his outstretched hand.

"Want to give me those, do yer?" he asked thickly.

The duchess smiled and nodded. She saw that he was strangled with natural emotion, and she was still too much a duchess not to be pleasantly aware of her own magnanimity.

"'Oo'd they belong to?" he shot at

She was too taken aback, too shocked, to answer, and it was Sally Jakes who came to the rescue. She nudged her husband playfully with her elbow.

"'Old yer tongue, Bert. Supposin' some one was to arsk us, ''Oo does that silver stuff belong to?' Yer wouldn't like it, now would yer?"

"She's owned to it, then?" he growled

"On course she 'as. Don't be a fool, Bert."

He pushed her roughly to one side. With shaking hands, he spread out the cambric handkerchief and pointed an accusing finger at the embroidered corner.

"I know 'oo yer are!" he said, with slow and deadly significance. "I know 'oo yer are!" he repeated between his teeth.

The duchess caught her breath. That telltale embroidered coronet settled the matter. She had forgotten it, and its unexpected betrayal was both painful and confusing. The duchess crimsoned to the roots of her raven-black hair.

"Mr. Jakes," she said, "if you do know me, then I can only say that it is the most distressing, awkward predicament I could possibly be in. I do hope, Mr. Jakes," she continued with dignity, "that I can rely on your discreet silence with regard to the whole foolish escapade."

"Escapade!" he echoed. "Got to 'old my tongue, 'ave I?"

"I should be very much obliged if it could be managed. In the meantime, pray accept these stones as a token of my——"

Mr. Jakes interrupted her with a violent blow on the table.

"Trying to pass 'em off on to us, are yer?" he thundered. "Tryin' to get us into trouble——"

"I'm not. I have not the slightest desire—"

"Ho, no, on course not!" He gave a short, sarcastic laugh. "Let me tell yer 'oo those rings belong to—I knows. They belong to the Duchess of Ashminster."

"Obviously," the duchess agreed, with some coldness.

"Ah, so yer owns to it! P'r'aps yer know wots 'appened to 'er?"

"Most certainly I do."

"So do I." He drew himself to his full height and pointed his finger in the duchess' face. "So does every one wot reads the mornin' papers. 'Er grace, the Duchess of Ashminster"—he enunciated his words with terrific significance—"'er grace disappeared last night. Her shawl was found on the Thames Embankment. They're draggin' the river for 'er corpse. She was done in."

Sally Jakes screamed. The duchess was silent, partly because she did not understand, partly because, for once in her life, she found it difficult to say the right thing.

Mr. Albert Jakes pushed the rings

across the table.

"Yer thought, 'cos I stole, I'd stick at nothin'. But I do stick. I wouldn't touch them things with the end of a barge pole. An' wot's more, I ain't goin' to shield yer. I'm goin' to the police—"

His wife clung to him in an agony of terror.

"Bert—yer can't! They'll 'ave you, too. It'll mean years o' quod——"

"I don't care. I won't 'ave no traffic with no murd'ress. I've 'ad to steal, but I'll 'ave no blood on me 'ands. You come out o' this, Sal."

The duchess rose to her feet.

"My good man," she began with gracious authority, "this is a ridiculous mistake. The duchess has not been murdered. I can assure you on that point." She smiled with the consciousness of creating a real effect on these simple, quite delightfully honest people. "You see, I am the Duchess of Ashminster," she said.

Mr. Albert Jakes, with his resisting wife, had reached the door. He turned and stared back.

"Duchess!" he said. "Yer looks like one, don't yer?"

The door slammed. The key turned in the lock. There was the sound of voices arguing heatedly and the fading thud of feet on the stairs. The duchess was alone with Sir John's silver and the Jakes' baby. She caught a glimpse of herself in the piece of broken mirror. She saw the wonderful black hair. In a prophetic vision, she saw the blacker headlines in the morning papers.

Whereupon Elizabeth, Duchess of

Ashminster, quietly fainted.

## IV.

"If yer please, sir, the p'lice is 'ere with a man who says he's got himportant hinformation."

The four occupants of Colonel Magree's library started violently from their various meditations. Sir John O'Neill turned his white, drawn face in the direction of the stoical Griffins,

"Show them up at once."

In the interval of waiting, they endeavored to compose themselves, with but faint success. The colonel paged restlessly backward and forward, muttering and counting under his breath. The Lady Angela looked faintly uneasy, though skeptical. Mrs. Cochrane divided her distressed attention between the two men.

"Douglas, do try to be calm. You know how bad it is for your heart. Sir John, I know how terribly you must feel it all, but we must be brave—we must hope for the best—we must—"

At that moment, Albert Jakes, with another person in those peculiarly noticeable civilian garments which are supposed to disguise gentlemen of the C. I. D., made his appearance. The four braced themselves. Detective James in-

troduced his companion briefly and without enthusiasm.

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"He says he knows what's happened to her grace. He's got some story about having the culprit locked up in his garret. Whether it's true or not, goodness knows, but I thought I'd better bring him along before we make a public case of it."

"Quite right, officer." Sir John threw back his shoulders. His fine mouth was hard set in the brave effort to hide his emotion. He came up to Mr. Jakes and looked that personage full in the eyes.

"The duchess is extremely dear to us all," he said. "I beg of you, therefore, to make no rash statement—to say nothing that could mislead us. On the other hand, if you help, I shall do everything in my power to show my appreciation."

Albert Jakes smiled a very bitter smile.

"I knows 'oo yer are," he said.
"Yer're Sir John O'Neill. An' when
yer knows 'oo I am, I knows 'ow appreciative yer'll be. But I ain't 'ere countin' the cost. I've got to do my dooty.
I knows wot's 'appened to 'er grace an'
I knows 'oo done it."

"In Heaven's name, man-done what?"

"Done 'er in." There was a moment's stricken silence. Even the colonel stood still. Albert Jakes looked gloomily from one to the other. "It was a woman done it," he went on; "a black-haired, black-eyed hussy wot might be up to anythink—murderin' my kid now, for all I knows. She's got 'er grace's rings an' 'er 'ankerchief. Brazen, she was—fairly owned up to it. Wanted to push the goods on to me—"

Sir John mastered himself.

"We must go at once," he said. "Griffins—a taxi, instantly."

He pushed the stolid ex-orderly to one side and ran down the stairs with the agility of a boy. Colonel Magree started to run, but remembered in time.

"One—two—three— Oh, damn it all! Give me my coat—my hat—Griffins—you idiot—my hat——"

He was gone, like a suddenly released tornado. The C. I. D. gentleman and Mr. Jakes followed at leisure, and the two women were left alone in the bewildered, distraught silence that follows on a violent storm. Mrs. Cochrane clasped and unclasped her hands in an agony of distress.

"He shouldn't do it," she said brokenly. "His heart's bad. He might drop down dead any moment."

"Well, I don't see what it matters to you," the Lady Angela retorted, white-faced and bitter. "You don't care."

"You're heartless, Angela."

"I'm not heartless. You've never cared for any one except Captain Cochrane—you're always saying so. If Colonel Magree does drop down dead, I don't see why you need make a fuss." Her voice shook. "And, anyhow—he isn't your mother lying in the Thames," she added hoarsely.

Mrs. Cochrane rose with tragic dig-

nity and rang the bell.

"I'm going after him," she said. "If this is the end, I must be there. I know poor Douglas would wish it. Griffins a taxi!"

They arrived almost simultaneously. If such a description is permissible in connection with such aristocratic personages, their progress up the narrow wooden stairs might be called a scuffle. But at the top they halted—startled to a standstill by the glaringly obvious fact that the door of the garret had been sprung open and hung on a broken hinge. Mr. Albert Jakes groaned.

"She's 'ooked it!" he gasped.
"'Ooked it!"

They entered the miserable apartment in close formation, as the war correspondents have it, but except for the incongruous display of silver on the table and Mrs. Jakes nursing her baby, there was nothing and nobody there. The detective showed signs of seizing upon Mrs. Jakes, but her husband thrust him back.

"You keep yer 'ands off 'er." He advanced sternly. "Sal, wot 'ave yer gone

an' been an' done?"

She faced him, pale, but fearless.

"I let 'er go," she said. "I 'ad to. I 'eard 'er fall an' when I found 'er all faintlike—well, I just 'adn't the 'eart to keep 'er. I couldn't 'a' done it, Bert."

"You've done for me, anyhow," he

said bitterly.

She looked about her wistfully. Sir John, who had gone over to the table, picked up a dirty envelope, and she nodded.

"She wrote that just before she

went," she said.
"It's addressed to me," Sir John be-

gan huskily.
"I dare say, sir." Sally Takes agreed

"I dare say, sir," Sally Jakes agreed listlessly.

She began to cry, and her husband put his arm protectingly about her. Amidst a dead silence, Sir John tore open the envelope.

DEAR SIR JOHN: I am not murdered— "done in," I think is the local expression and I have not been robbed. I have just

escaped.

I am out on a great adventure. I am out in pursuit of something I have lost—or perhaps never had. Already I have found out some amazing facts. For instance, there are some beautiful things outside Park Lane. And I have discovered the great difference between me and most people. It's a banking account.

On the other hand, the difference between me and very doubtful characters seems to be slight—almost negligible.

It has been quite a revelation.

I know I ought to have waited and explained everything, but I fancy my appearance would have been a terrible shock to you. Besides, I might not have been able to escape again-and I don't want to come back just yet.

Please be very, very good to the Jakes, and don't let any one "chivvy" them again. Also, take care of Angela and see that she does not do anything foolish. She is inclined to be headstrong and unconventional. And don't worry about your affectionate old friend,

ELIZABETH.

P. S.—Try and keep all this out of the papers. I shall want to come back some day.

P. S. S.—John dear, I wonder if we are really as old as we thought we were?

Sir John said nothing. He handed the letter to Colonel Magree, who read it with the Lady Angela and Mrs. Cochrane peering over on either side.

The C. I. D. gentleman touched the dreaming Sir John on the elbow.

"Your silver, I think, sir."
Sir John smiled vaguely.

"Is it? Yes, I dare say-"

"There's no doubt, sir. I'd better arrest this fellow—"

Sir John started and glanced at Mr. and Mrs. Jakes. They stood together, the man's arm about the woman's shoulder, defying the worst.

"No, certainly not—a friend of the duchess—— He can keep the stuff, for all I care. I—we owe Mr. Jakes a debt of gratitude. What do you say, colonel?"

But Colonel Magree shook his head gloomily.

"It's beyond me," he said. "I ought to be dead. I ought to have dropped down hours ago. I can't think what's wrong. That fellow Barclay must be an ass."

He looked about him with an air of grievance.

There was a tear on Mrs. Cochrane's cheek—a tear of obvious thankfulness, no doubt connected with the duchess' safety.

But the colonel felt suddenly and wonderfully consoled.

[The third episode in this sprightly series will be printed in December.]



THERE was a dance at the country club, and Alice Morley clearly wanted to go. Bill didn't. He hated dances, even at a club where a fellow could sneak off and talk business over a rickey; he hated getting into stiff, formal clothes and sitting up half the night with a full day ahead of him. Bill's idea of a perfect evening was to make himself as comfortable as possible in his pet chair, reabsorb the contents of three evening papers already skimmed during the trip out from town, and turn in about ten to earned and peaceful sleep.

He was very fond of Alice, of course; he liked to have her sit silently across the table and embroider or knit. Bill's tastes were primitive. His supply of pep, as he explained patiently to Alice, went into the business of selling every possible ton of cement between the hours of nine and five. When he came home, he wanted to let down. Besides, he wasn't parlor broke -he didn't know what to say to women who asked him whether he preferred Tschaikowsy or Leo Ornstein or the one-step. If Alice wanted to go, all right-he didn't object; he wasn't a dog in the manger. He dismissed her contention that she couldn't go without her husband as childish.

For the fiftieth time, they had verged dangerously on acidity in their debate,

and Bill wasn't in the best of tempers when he went into the hall after his paper. His eye rested on the card tray, which held a single narrow bit of engraved cardboard. On impulse, he lifted the card. The legend, beautifully inscribed, banished his rubbed-the-wrong-way feeling. He chuckled.

"Mr. Reginald Warrington Pierce, 3d!" So there really was a living human named Reginald! Bill had doubted this; it seemed incredible that any parent should so handicap a helpless and unsuspecting offspring. Reggie, ch? Alice actually knew an alleged male being named Reggie! He was in excellent humor as he came back to the library. Alice was reading, her lips pressed straightly together. Bill studied her over his paper, hugging his joke.

"I say, Alice, how's dear old Reggie, anyway? Did you ask him about Harold and Percy and Clarence?"

Alice glanced up sharply.

"Reggie—I don't know what you mean. I don't know—"

A faint—a very faint gleam of doubt flashed across Bill Morley's mind. He'd never had even a bowing acquaintance with jealousy or distrust. He'd always taken Alice for granted. Why should she try to deny knowing this Reginald person? Why—unless— He scarcely followed the

process of reasoning by which he arrived at the vague disquiet that descended on him.

"Reggie Pierce, of course-Reggie the Third. Wasn't he here this afternoon?"

"Was he?"

Alice spoke coolly. Bill brandished the card. She took it, glanced at it. Her face changed swiftly. Bill fancied he saw a faint heightening of the color in her cheeks.

"Oh, that Reggie. Yes-he was here this afternoon. What about it?" There was a touch of defiance in her tone that Bill didn't like.

"Who is he?"

"Reginald Warrington Pierce, Third, of course." Alice resumed her book.

"I know. I mean what does he dowho is the fellow-a friend of yours or what?"

"Oh, I haven't known him long enough to call him a friend, exactly.

Alice was suspiciously deep in her reading. Bill hesitated.

"Why haven't I run into him, then? It's funny you should have a pal-"

"Mr. Pierce isn't a 'pal' of mine." Alice laid down her book and rose. "As for your not knowing him, how could you? He's not in the cement business, and you decline to associate with any one who isn't. Very likely I know a dozen men that you never saw. What of it?"

Bill subsided. He couldn't very well explain that he hadn't liked her trying to deny Reggie.

"Nothing," he said gruffly, rattling

his paper.

Alice hesitated a moment. Then:

"I think I'll change my mind and go to the club dance, Bill. The Frasers will take me."

Bill rattled his paper "All right." again.

Alice went out to the hall. He heard her telephoning.

"Amy? Yes. Amy, will you and

Phil stop for me on your way to the club? Bill doesn't feel like going. Thanks. Oh, don't be silly! At nine. then. You're a dear to take me."

Bill's paper slipped to his knees. It began to dawn on him that there were a number of things in the world that had nothing whatever to do with the manufacture and sale of cement. Alice must want to go to this dance pretty badly. She'd never before been willing to go unless he did; why should she change her mind now? It was absurd to think that she'd be interested in-in anybody -and yet-

Bill got to his feet and glanced at his watch. Alice had gone upstairs. He

followed her.

"I'll go with you, Alice, if you're so keen on it."

She did not turn, busy before her

"Oh, you're tired, Bill. Never mind coming to-night. I don't mind going with Amy and Phil-truly I don't."

Bill's lower lip protruded.

"I'd just as soon go., I've got time to dress-

"Don't be silly, dear. I've told Amy and Phil now, and their car only holds three at a pinch. You stay here with your papers and go to bed early."

Bill yielded. He put her into Fraser's runabout, observing that she was unusually in spirits, as gay and excited as a schoolgirl and undeniably good to look at, too. His mind wandered persistently from the paper, and he was still awake when Alice came in.

"Have a good time?" He called to her with a feigned drowsiness.

"Lovely! Go to sleep, Biil. I didn't mean to wake you."

A pause. Then:

"Reggie there?"

Another pause. Then, very weakly: "I-I don't think so. Good night, Bill."

Alice's door closed. Bill watched the ribbon of light below it until it vanished. Of course it was all right-but \_but \_\_ He dreamed gloriously of epic triumphs over regiments of slimwaisted young men named Reggie.

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He met Fraser on the eight-fifteen. They exchanged grunts of greeting and read their morning papers with the deliberate absorption of tried commuters till the tunnel reduced the light. Bill ventured a cautious question.

"Many at the dance last night?" "Pretty fair crowd. Good time, too."

Fraser vawned reminiscently.

"Pierce there?" Bill affected a casual manner.

"Pierce? Don't think I know him." "Reggie Pierce-you know surely. Young Reggie, I mean-the old man's nephew."

"Oh-that chap-yes," said Fraser vaguely. "Seems to me I did see him, now you mention it. Friend of Alice's, isn't he?"

"Sort of." Bill's fists clenched.

"Thought so. Saw him dancing with her, I guess. Tall, skinny lad-

The cement business suffered heavily that day. Bill couldn't get his mind on it. He had a persistent memory of Alice's voice saying: "I-I don't think so." And Phil Fraser had seen her dancing with him! Of course it was all right-it had to be all right-and yet-why should she lie about it? Had he ever objected to her having all the friends she pleased? Why should she cover up this one? Why-why-why?

He went home early. It was just as well he did. For a messenger arrived one moment after he did-a boy with a long, long box with "roses" in every line of it. Morley signed for it and gave the boy a dime or two, mechanically. His fingers fumbled persistently with the knots, but he didn't open it. Alice did that, when she came in. Strangely enough, Bill was within eyeshot of her when she drew out the tissue-wrapped, dewy sheaf of longstemmed beauties, heard her little

scream of delight over them. She looked startled when he came toward

"Aren't they adorable?" She held them out to him.

"Great. Who sent 'em?"

Bill contrived to be casual about it, though his hands were shut rather tighter than usual. She fumbled for the envelope and drew out the card.

"Reginald Pierce! Isn't that dear of him!"

She carried it off very well, but Bill thought her cheeks were too pink over it. And when she mentioned the Walker dance, he surprised her by announcing that he meant to go. She surveved him curiously.

'You're quite sure you want to?"

"Don't you want me to?"

His self-control slipped perceptibly. If she urged him to stay home-But she dimpled happily.

"Goose! Of course I want you."

His reassurance lasted only until he discovered that Mrs. Walker didn't know any one named Reginald Warrington Pierce, 3d. Then it occurred to him that Alice's willingness to have him come with her was susceptible of more than one explanation. He insisted on dancing with her several times. She bore it very well, considering that Bill had two left feet and weighed a hundred and eighty.

There were violets from Reggie next day, and the day after that orchids, and the day after that roses again. Bill fumed privately and managed to smile at Alice's innocent delight. On Saturday he sent her an armful of roses himself. Reggie offered orchids. Alice wore the orchids to the club dance, explaining that the roses were too wonderful to be wasted. Bill spent the evening in vigilant scrutiny of every stranger present who might remotely answer the description of a "tall, skinny lad." But Reggie disappointed him by failing to appear. There were plenty

of volunteers for his vacant place, however. Bill became aware that his wife was exceedingly popular—especially with youngsters who danced diabolically well. He didn't know whether he liked this or hated it, but he was quite sure that he liked Alice a great deal. He hadn't realized how tremendously he cared about her.

Reggie eluded him for two dreadful weeks, but the flowers came regularly. Bill stopped sending them, after three attempts. He wasn't going to enter an undignified rivalry in extravagance with an outsider, a home breaker, a slim, insidious, social butterfly who went about dancing attendance on other men's wives. But he promised himself that when he finally met Reggie- Well, what could he do? He resented the restraints of a decadent civilization. The rules gave Reggie all the advantages. Still, it would be some satisfaction to know what the fellow was like. Bill had a fine mental image of him which he yearned to compare with the reality. And he discovered a fine flutter inside his forty-two-inch bosom when his secretary brought him the card of Mr. Reginald Warrington Pierce, 3d, with the message that Mr. Pierce besought an interview upon a mission too personal to be confided to any underling.

"Send him in," choked Bill Morley.
His fist crumpled the card. At last!
Mr. Pierce tiptoed into his presence,
wearing a smile so tenderly propitiating
that Morley struggled against the im-

pulse to slap his open hand across it.

He was beautifully clad, although—in deference to the prejudice of business men, no doubt—he had omitted the spats that Bill had mentally attributed to him. He seated himself confidentially beside Morley's desk.

"Î've had the pleasure of discussing a matter with Mrs. Morley which she feels should be laid before you, Mr. Morley. So I've taken the liberty of intruding on your time here——"

"All right about that." Morley loosened his collar, "Go on!"

"Thank you. Mr. Morley, it is my privilege to represent the publishers of the most stupendous literary sensation of the century—a work without which no library is complete——"

After a long time Morley became aware of a printed form persuasively before him, a fountain pen convenient to his hand. He signed as one in a trance. Mr. Reginald Warrington Pierce evaporated, clutching his contract, a misty shape of smiles and thanks.

Bill Morley dances rather well, considering his weight. He plays a good game of bridge and, even when marooned between two dinner neighbors previously unknown, converses with some show of ease upon topics wholly foreign to the intricacies of cement. It seems to annoy him, however, to be called Reggie. His wife very rarely needs to do it, nowadays. She wears rather nicer flowers, too, than most women who have been married as long as she has.





## Love Maggy

By Countess Barcynska

Author of "The Honey Pot," etc.

COM

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Auditorium, New York City, Feb. 26th.

EXIE PET: I am a beast not to have written before, but there are times when letters seem no good, and I'm a bad hand at them, anyway. Besides, nothing much has happened out here all these months except that I like it and have been very lucky in getting a long engagement. The play I'm in has been running ever since October, I thought I should hate America, and it's just the other way. You may laugh, but Americans seem to have a lot of French characteristics -hospitality and friendliness, I mean. Also, I like getting ice whenever I want it. Just now I don't want it.

Of course I sometimes miss not being in England. I have been hungry to hear about everybody and thing-you and baby and Chalfont and the dear, dear creatures at home. I'd give my soul to have a glimpse of them all. Lexie, tell me lots about Chalfont. You must have seen him once or twice in five months. Does he look settled and happy? Does he come to London much? Tell me the littlest thing you can about him. You are sure to have been down at Purton with baby. How is the place looking? Say heaps and heaps about it. You're so good at describing.

Well, I'm coming back again, like a bad penny, in about six weeks. This play is some success, and Spelmann is mad to take it to London. So we shall open at his theater there early in April. Clive Lukey, the author of it, and his little girl are coming, too. She's the dearest kiddie and can only just walk. I'll tell you all about that when I see you. Lukey asked me to marry him. I wouldn't breathe it to anybody but yourself. Of course I couldn't, but I've adopted them both, and we're a regular happy family.

I wouldn't come to England to play if it wasn't for Lukey and his kiddie. The piece is making them a fortune. There are three companies out on tour, and it's been filmed as well. The more fees they get, the better, for they need them and deserve them. My part is fairly important, so it would be real mean of me to throw it up.

What does baby weigh now? Do you still sling her up on a meat hook to find out?

Answer all my questions:

- I. Chalfont. You can do pages of this.
  - 2. Home-Onions.
- 3. Lancing. Is he at the motor works still, and has he made his money back?
  - 4. My dear, dear Chalfont.

Ever your loving,

MAGGY.

#### CHAPTER XL.

Every day was like another to Chalfont, and every one unutterably dreary. With Maggy had gone all his interest in life. More than ever of late had he realized that she was part and parcel of his existence, and that without her it was empty. He missed her in a thousand ways, big and little, though none seemed little now. With time to think and regret, her very faults had become virtues, her virtues like precious odors "most fragrant when trodden under foot." He yearned for the cheery comrade and the loving woman. A supreme craving for her possessed him. He was never free from it. Nor was he ever free from the self-accusing fear that he had driven her away. That he had not done so knowingly was no consolation to him.

The sting of his unhappiness lay in his inability to find her. She seemed completely lost, swallowed up. Everything he had been able to do to trace her he had done. He had hoped much from Alexandra, but she, though sorely tempted to send him on to Sidey Street, had kept her promise to Maggy and affected ignorance. A week later, she had learned that Maggy was on her way to America; nothing more. She did not know her destination or the name she was traveling under. For five months she did not hear from her.

When at last Maggy did write, giving an address, she decided that the time had come for her to try to make up the quarrel. She thought she might do it by making a partial disclosure to Chalfont. It would at least relieve his anxiety. She had that on her conscience. As for Maggy, her list of questions plainly showed where her inclinations lay. Altogether, the letter let Alexandra out, and unfeignedly glad she was of it. She wrote off at once to Chalfont; told him that Maggy was in New York, apparently in good health

and spirits, doing well on the stage there, and that she expected to be in London in six weeks' time. She appended the inquisitorial schedule of inquiries in order of numeration and emphasis. If they gave Maggy away, Alexandra couldn't help it. She made a great show of discretion by withholding the New York address and by offering to forward any letter he might care to intrust her with. She hoped she was doing right.

The news came to Chalfont like rain on parched ground. It rejoiced his heart and refreshed his soul. He hardly noticed Alexandra's reservations. The cloud was all silver lining. There and then he shut himself up in his library and in a long letter to Maggy

relieved his pent-up feelings.

He wrote quite simply. He did not indulge in a vestige of complaint. The letter was just thankful and hopeful. Her approaching return was his text. He prayed it might be to Purtonhome. He told her how he missed her, how he longed for her. He answered all her questions very fully and copiously. He gave her pages about his tenantry, their latest marriages and newest babies: his own domestic matters: the condition of the home farm, the grounds, the trees, and all growing things. Concerning Onions, he wrote He knew she could at great length. not have too much of that. He spoke of the dog's persistence in waiting and watching for her. It was his own attitude and he described it vividly.

He was able to give her good news of Lancing. There had been a recovery in his mining shares. He had got a good bit of his money back and paid off the money lender. He was doing well at the motor works. There was a girl there, Lady Grandage's second daughter, one of those newfangled girls with a taste for mechanics, but very pretty and good style. Lancing seemed very struck on her. He said she re-

minded him of Maggy. Last of all there were a few lines about the Simmons. They had let Wishwell, so she wouldn't be bothered with them when she came back. Here Chalfont remarked that he would never believe she had any personal object in knowing them, that he was quite sure it had only been a question of toleration with her for some generous motive, and that one day perhaps she would tell him all about it.

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When he read the letter through, it seemed to him that he had not half succeeded in expressing the intensity of his longing for her. But then no words could do that. If she loved him, she surely would read between the lines and come home. He was ready to take her back on any terms. He would never again question anything she might do or disapprove of any one she might like to know. He just wanted her unconditionally.

With the letter, in a covering envelope addressed to Alexandra, he went into the hall and dropped it into the post box. As he did so, he heard a woman's voice inquiring for him.

"Writing and can't be disturbed?" it proceeded. "Then I'll wait until he's finished. Send some one to hold my horse, will you?"

He did not know the voice, but as he went on toward the outer hall, he recognized the owner of it. He had seen her out riding and had heard her name mentioned. It was Lady Susan. He came to a sudden stop.

"Mornin', Lord Chalfont," she said, nothing daunted. "Suppose I needn't introduce myself. Take me somewhere where we can talk. I always feel I'm bein' listened to in a hall."

On the spur of the moment, it had been Chalfont's intention to excuse himself, but her words implied the need for privacy, and he changed his mind. It was out of consideration for himself, not her. He had seen the report

of the divorce proceedings which she had brought against Woolf. He led the way to the library.

"Along here? Right-o," she said, and went in with more show of assurance than she felt. "Glad to find you in first shot," she continued, directly she was seated, "because I should have had to come again if you'd been out. I'm leaving the neighborhood—goin' to get spliced to an old flame of mine directly the decree's made absolute-and I want to put a certain matter straight first. I see you're wonderin' what on earth I can possibly have to do with you and your concerns. Well, that's what I've come to explain. Fact is, I'm responsible for a most unholy muddle in your domestic affairs, and I'm deuced sorry for it."

It was not astonishment that Chalfont felt. What his face really expressed was resentment and dislike. In a roundabout way he had guessed that her visit had something to do with Maggy—he couldn't get closer to it than that—and it humiliated him to have to listen to her on such a subject. What he could not understand was her tone of regret. It was real.

Onions had followed them into the room. He stood wagging his tail at Lady Susan in a friendly way. She stooped and patted him.

"Your wife's dog? I expect he misses her," she said, and made Chalfont wince. "It's your wife I've come to talk about."

"Is it necessary?" he asked stiffly.

"Yes. I wish it wasn't. Hold hard a minute. I'd better say right away that I've a tremendous respect for your wife. Then perhaps you'll be more inclined to listen. I haven't a word to say against her. It's the other way about. I've come to eat dirt on her account."

"Please be as brief as you can."

"I'll try to. I want to whitewash my

conscience and relieve yours, and it isn't easy. First of all, I suppose I may take it you know-she's the sort to have been quite straight with you-that before she married you, she had the bad luck to know the skunk I afterward married. You needn't say anything if you don't care to. I quite understand your feelings. It's no pleasanter to me to have to drag that in than it is to you to hear it. Unfortunately, it can't be helped. I'll go on premising, as lawyers do, and you must correct me if I'm wrong anywhere. Your wife's past wasn't discussed because nobody knew anything about it, and she behaved in such really A-1 fashion that there wasn't any reason for people to say anything against her. Then, quite by accident, we came on the scene, and Fred tried to pal up to your wife. don't think you knew that."

"I did not. I can hardly credit it."

"Ah, you would if you'd known him! He was that sort. He met her in the train. By accident, he said, but I don't believe it. I'd lay long odds he forced himself on her. She couldn't very well throw him out of the window, but she jolly well snubbed him. That's how I got to hear of it. He was too furious with her to keep it to himself. It spoiled his plans. It appears he'd just got to know a rich blighter called Simmons, who was keen on an introduction to you and your wife. He told Fred he'd finance him if he could manage it. Well, as he couldn't, he turned the job over to me. We were pretty well broke, which is the only excuse I have to make for myself. I had to play his dirty game. I came here and called on your wife and as good as blackmailed her. I told her that unless she made herself pleasant to these Simmons, she'd probably get talked about."

Up to within the last minute, Chalfont had shown a stoic control. He had given Lady Susan tacit permission to talk, and though it was an ordeal to

have to listen to her, he had put up with it. But when she mentioned Simmons, his equanimity was disturbed. The name brought a glimpse of enlightenment with it. After that, every word she spoke cleared up the hitherto incomprehensible cause of discord between Maggy and himself. By the time she had finished, he understood that his poor Maggy had been the victim of a vile conspiracy. To protect herself, she had been forced to know the Simmons. She had made a martyr of herself rather than give him the pain of knowing why. And in his obtuseness, he had let her suffer this outrage. He heaped himself with reproaches. And vet, behind it all, he could not help being thankful that at last he knew where he was. While he deplored the evil, he saw how it could be remedied. Lady Susan's admissions showed that the danger was past. Maggy had nothing to fear from her. He would be able to tell her so, and she would come back. So overjoyed was he at the thought that he almost overlooked the enormity of the offense.

"That's about all, and it's enough," resumed Lady Susan, "But I'd like to say this: If she'd been thinking of herself only, she'd have snapped her fingers at me and told me to go to the devil. But I'm dead sure she had visions of how you'd feel if you heard her discussed all over the shop. She was thinkin' of you. That's what frightened her. So she caved in and called on the Simmons. As it happened, it didn't do us a scrap of good. I was sorry for what I'd done before that, though, and I was a deuced sight more sorry when I heard she'd cleared out. I guessed it was mainly my fault. If I hadn't had my own worries, I'd have come and told you all this before now. If it's any consolation to you to know it. I've had some pretty bad nights on your wife's account."

She waited for a moment as if ex-

pecting him to say something. As he remained silent, she rose from her chair.

"Well, I've eaten the leek, so I'll be off," she said, with a poor attempt at

bravado.

Chalfont fought down a natural inclination to say something that would leave her in no doubt of the grievous harm she had done. But words wouldn't mend it. And, after all, he thought it rather fine of her to come and own up to her fault.

"It is some consolation to me to know that you're sorry. You've done your best to make amends, and I appreciate it," he said temperately as he opened the door for her.

She put her hands up to her face. "Oh, don't!" she cried. "Can't you see I'm ashamed?"

She hurried down the hall and out of the door, where she took the reins from the man who was holding her mare. Chalfont helped her into the saddle.

"Thanks," she said, and after a momentary hesitation, bent down and spoke in an undertone: "I hope to God you'll soon be together again! Come up, Ladybird!"

She flicked the mare lightly with her whip and rode away with her face on fire.

#### CHAPTER XLI.

A name in big print across the column hit Lancing in the face. He folded the newspaper and, with both elbows on the office table, studied the announcement that contained it. Then he made a funny noise.

"What did you say?" asked the Honorable Sylvia Grandage across the table.

"Eh? What? I say, Sylvie! Listen to this!" He began reading: "'A truly delightful play, in which only the title is superfluous, for all London will 'Love Maggy'—Daily Telegraph. 'The most wholesome piece imaginable. Exquisite pathos, real wit, tears, merriment, and above all—Maggy'—Daily Mail.

'Sheer joy from beginning to end.'— Morning Post. Goes on like that all down the column."

"Where's it at?"

"The Corinthian. Produced last week. Of course I was out of town and missed it!" He went on reading: "Robert Spelmann presents Miss Kitty Slightly in "Love Maggy," by Clive Lukey. Entire company direct from the Auditorium, New York.' It's—why, good Lord, it's the name of her cat!"

"Whose cat? What is?"

"Maggy's! Must be! Or else——" Lancing lowered the paper and stared stupidly at her.

"What are you so excited about?" she exclaimed.

"Don't you see? Maggy had a cat called Mrs. Slightly! Cat—kitty! Took it away with her. And this play's called 'Love Maggy'—Maggy! It's either the most extraordinary coincidence or——"

"Do you mean Lady Chalfont, whose husband I met at your mother's?"

"Yes, of course." He pulled out his watch, slammed the paper down on the table, and said impetuously: "Put on your hat, Sylvie! Matinée to-day at three! Come on!"

Sylvia caught some of his excitement. She jumped up, reached for her hat, and then stopped.

"What about the letters? And these specifications?"

"I'll come back and attend to them. Where's Brash?"

He opened the door of the adjoining room and shouted to a clerk that he and Miss Grandage had to go out. Sylvia skewered on her hat without looking into the glass. She put it on back to front in happy unconcern and without in the least marring the effect. The minutes of an unexpected afternoon off were not to be trifled with.

"I say! My hands, though!" she said, and held them out. "I haven't

washed them since we were fiddling with that timing gear."

"Never mind your hands. Can't wait. Put your gloves on. Cut along

down."

He rushed her downstairs, through the show room, and out into Coventry Street. Every taxi that passed them was engaged. But he didn't wait. With a reckless disregard of life and limb, he raced her across Leicester Square in the direction of St. Martin's Lane. At the National Portrait Gallery, they were held up by the traffic, and Sylvia had a chance to get her breath.

"Did you always go this pace to see your old girl, Betty Aragon, in a new

piece?" she chaffed.

"Hang it! Don't talk like that!" he protested. "I've told you the truth about that beastly affair. You might drop it."

"I was only pulling your leg, old thing. What are you going to do if this Kitty Slightly turns out to be Lady

Chalfont?"

"Simplest thing going. Send a wire to Chalfont to come up to the evening show. Catch hold! We can get across now."

Neatly dodging a motor bus and just escaping a whizzing fiend loaded with "early specials," they reached the opposite pavement and sped around the

"Here we are," said Lancing. "Let's see if there's a photo of her outside. Not one! Well, we'll soon know. Two stalls, please. Bang in front. What, no stalls? Box, then. House full? Great Scott! Sylvie, d'you mind the

upper circle? All they've got."

Even there they had to stand, heads and shoulders of earlier comers intercepting their view. The play had begun. A woman on Sylvia's right exuded essence of peppermint. Lancing's angle of vision was circumscribed by hat feathers.

But Maggy was on the stage-her real self and none other. Lancing would have identified her through a feather bed. He was in a fever. He didn't know whether to stay and watch her, go around and hug her, or rush out to the nearest telegraph office and wire the great news to Chalfont. But he couldn't tear himself away. She held him, as she held everybody else in the theater-this Maggy, this impulsive tomboy in an old riding skirt and boots and spurs, fierce one moment, wheedling the next, wholly irresponsible, doing and saying unexpected things, laughing and laughter compelling. For there was no sentiment in the first act. "Is it she?" whispered Sylvia.

"My aunt, yes! Did you hear? No one could say, 'Oh, hell!' just like that, except Maggy! Damn these feathers! Let's go out and book a box for to-

night."

"I'm not going. I wouldn't miss any of it for worlds! She—she's glorious!"

So they remained where they were, crushed in, till the end of the second act. By that time Sylvia's eyes were raining tears. Lancing blinked at her.

"I must go round and see her," he

choked. "Come on."

At the stage door, when he had sent in his card, Sylvia hung back.

"Go in by yourself," she said. "She won't want me."

"You'll see a lot of Maggy before long. Better begin now."

They went in. Maggy was at the door of her dressing room, waiting. She ran at Lancing, and he, quite unable to resist the impulse, seized hold of her and kissed her.

"Oh, Lancing!" she gasped. "How lovely to see you! Where's Chalfont?

Is he---"

She stopped at sight of the strange girl in the background.

"No, but he soon will be. Maggy, this is Sylvia—Miss Grandage. She's at the Elite works with me. Great pal

of my mother's."

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"Then you know Purton!" exclaimed Maggy. "Come in, come in, and let me shut the door. Oh, you lucky girl! How I long to see the dear place again! Why, you've been crying!"

"It's your fault, Lady Chalfont. We've been in front. No one's ever made me cry in a theater before. Look at my nose! May I use your powder?"

"Of course. It's not me. It's that silly song. I shall cry in a minute, too, if I think of Purton. Lancing, for mercy's sake tell me all about Chalfont. How is he? Where is he? I wrote to Lexie, but never got an answer. I expect I missed her letter. We sailed sooner than we expected."

"Sylvia can tell you more about Chalfont than I can. She saw him last week-end and thought he was a

widower."

"A widower!" faltered Maggy.

Sylvia stopped powdering her nose.

"I didn't," she protested. "I said he looked lonely. I—I think he misses you, Lady Chalfont."

"Oh, if I were sure of it! If only I were sure he wanted me back! I'd

walk there all the way!"

"You wouldn't doubt it if you could see the poor chap," said Lancing. "He's getting thin for want of you."

"Thin? But he's thin already!"

"Well, he's thinner. You know, Maggy, my dear, you gave us all a beastly knock. You knew where you were yourself, so it didn't worry you. But we—and especially Chalfont—were in despair——"

"Chalfont in despair? Really and

"Clean off his nut. If he'd known you were in America— Were you in America?"

Maggy nodded.

"He'd have swum across, I believe!"

Maggy clasped her hands. Her soul was in her eyes.

"So the sooner you go down to Purton, the better for him as well as yourself. You won't know the place. The Fanings have left. She got him an archdeaconry somewhere off the map. I forget where. And the Moat's empty—— Go away, boy!"

"Oh, bother!" exclaimed Maggy.
"It's my call. And I want to ask you

a thousand questions."

They left her, promising to come back at the end of the play. Much as they wanted to see the last act, they had to forego it in order that Chalfont might receive a telegram in time to get up to town that night. So they walked down to the post office opposite Charing Cross, and there Lancing wrote out various versions of what he wanted to convey, and tore them all up. To express it with proper discretion was beyond him.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Sylvia. "That's the fourth

you've foozled."

"It's a dashed tricky thing to explain without letting the post-office people down there know what it's all about," was his excuse.

"Let me write it for you," she sug-

gested.

"'Fraid you can't, dear. Being a girl, you'd say exactly what you feel in forty words or so, and all Purton would be gossiping to-morrow about the Chalfonts' private affairs. A wire like this is no good unless it's short—short and discreet."

"Well, what have you said?"
He handed her his latest effort.

The kitten has come back and wants to be taken home. Went and identified it myself at Corinthian this afternoon. Be there at eight-thirty to-night.

LANCING.

Sylvia read it and giggled.

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Lancing.

"The discretion. Oh, you innocent

old dear! Do you think the women at Purton post office won't see through it?"

"Of course they might," he conceded doubtfully. "I confess it's a puzzler. Suppose you have a shot at it." He pulled out a handful of forms. "Can you manage with these?"

"I'll try," she said. "Take this down:

"Corinthian Theater stage door to-night eight-thirty."

Lancing wrote the words.

"Go on," he said.

"That's all."

He gave her a superior smile.

"My dear child! You don't seriously imagine that a man like Chalfont, who hates theaters, is coming up at an hour or so's notice on the strength of that!"

"Sign it," said Sylvia, "sign \*it—
'Maggy.'"

Lancing looked at her in speechless admiration.

And that was the telegram that reached the Towers an hour later. Chalfont was out when it came. He didn't get it till a little after nine o'clock, and for a moment or two the surprise of it bowled him over. After that its admirable laconism steadied him. Maggy was acting at the Corinthian. That was clear because she said "stage door." He chafed at the time lost, but he could still be in town before she left the theater. Within five minutes, he had the Napier at the door, with Onions inside sniffing expectantly at Maggy's fur-lined motoring coat. Then, with dancing acetylenes and refulgent hope to light the way, he flew southward along the quiet roads.

It was a quarter to eleven when he reached his destination, a narrow street at the back of the theater. A light streamed from the open stage door, and the doorkeeper looked out inquisitively at the long-bonneted car with its blazing headlights. Chalfont asked him what time the performance would be

over and was informed that the curtain would be down in five minutes or so. So he sat patiently at the wheel and kept the engine running throttled down

to a deep, low pur. The five minutes passed. Stage hands, singly and în pairs, materialized out of the darkness and slithered in at the stage door, wiping their mouths. For a time all was quiet in the street, The shrill call of cab whistles from the other side of the building told Chalfont that the audience was dispersing. He wondered how long Maggy would take to dress. A couple of taxis came leisurely down the street and drew up behind the car. Some of the theater employees sauntered out and, with good nights to the doorkeeper, went their Another five minutes dragged by. Insidious doubts crept into Chalfont's mind. Could the telegram have been a hoax? Could Maggy have left the theater already? She might not be on in the last act. He was to have been there at eight-thirty. In a tumult of apprehension, he got out of the car.

Just then several people came out. Others were talking inside. Onions suddenly sat up, head on one side, ears cocked. His lead, fastened to the steering pillar, became taut.

"Good night, Miss Slightly," said some one in the doorway, and at the response, a low whine broke from Onions.

Chalfont heard the voice, too. He groped for the motor coat and took a step toward the door.

"No, not to-night, thanks, Mr. Lukey. I'm too tired. I'll get right away into a taxi and—""

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Maggy's voice. Maggy herself! A yelp from Onions had silenced her. She stood under the light in the doorway, looking at the car, the man, and the dog.

"Oh!" she cried faintly. "Chalfont!" and tottered toward him.

Without a word—he couldn't speak—

Chalfont wrapped the big coat around her and held her until she was beside him on the driving seat. Onions, mad with joy, leaped at her. The car slid away, out of the narrow street, into the glare of the main thoroughfare, still teeming with cabs and cars taking people from the theaters.

Maggy sat quite still, holding Onions to her. Once she heaved a big sigh of content and laid her hand on Chalfont's glove. He lifted one of his from the wheel and pressed it. When they were out of the thick of the traffic, she spoke

for the first time:

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"Where are you taking me?"

She knew, but her heart wanted to hear his lips say the word.

"Home," he answered, and went the faster.

But now her tongue was loosened.

"Oh, this is good!" she rejoiced.
"Chalfont, is it really you? Close to
me, touching me? Or is it one of the
hideous, tantalizing dreams I've had for
months and months? Won't you stop
a moment? I want to look at you.
Lancing says you're thin."

"Wait, dear," he said gently.

His one idea was to kill time, to eat up the miles. Literally, he felt he could neither stop nor talk until he had her safe at Purton. Once out on the great north road, he made the Napier fly. In the low, capacious seat behind the wind screen, Maggy only felt the luxury of speed. She nestled closer to him. She understood.

"Oh, go on, then! Let her out! Let her rip!" she sang.

Chalfont turned to look at her and thought her dear face showed the ecstasy her voice proclaimed.

"Is dying like this, I wonder?" he heard her say, and again he looked at her.

Through the hum of the valves, her voice thrilled to him, answering his unasked question:

"Rushing through the night—on wings—home!"

#### CHAPTER XLII.

They had all gone at last—Spelmann, Lukey, Vickey, and the members of the company—back to London after a flying visit to the Towers. On the morrow, they were to embark for New York. The drone of the cars that were taking them to the station rose and fell on the still evening air.

Maggy and Chalfont were sitting under the cedars. It was getting on for nine o'clock, but it was still quite light and, on the lawn, deliciously cool after

an effulgent August day.

"It was sweet of you to ask them down," said Maggy. "They were so good to me over there. I shall never forget it. The dears! They all said they'd had a lovely two days here and I know they meant it. Did you see how upset poor Spelmann was when he said good-by? And Vickey could hardly tear herself away."

She spoke dreamily, and her fingers

moved as if they were counting.

"I wonder," debated Chalfont, "why Spelmann let you off in the middle of your contract when we'd both decided it was the decent thing for you to abide by it. The play was going strong, too. It might easily have run another couple of hundred nights."

"Oh, he's such a kind old thing. Besides, it isn't as if it were going to stop. They open in New York with it directly they get back. It will be a sort of American 'Charley's Aunt.' They'll all be at home, too. That makes a difference." She stretched herself luxuriously. "Everything's for the best in this best of possible worlds. I think the man who said that must have just got home. Or if it was a woman—"

She came to a sudden stop and went on counting. Chalfont felt her fingers

moving in his hand.

"What are you counting?" he asked. "Bills?"

"M'm. But this one isn't due yet," she replied with a smothered laugh.

"Is it a big one?"

"It might be—eight to ten pounds." She spoke in amused jerks.

"Is that all?"

"It's quite enough. Pounds weight, I'm talking about. Lady Shelford says seven and a half is the average. She and I have been making guesses. I always had a feeling I should like it when the lambs come."

Chalfont turned a baffled face on her. "Like what, you witch?" he demanded.

"Mint sauce," exploded Maggy.
"Oh, you dear, silly goose of a man!"

He looked it. It would have taken a woman no more than a bare second to divine her meaning. He stumbled on it only at the end of a full minute. In the half light he looked at her with tender alarm.

"Maggy! You don't mean—You're not trying to tell me—" he

floundered.

"Listen! I had such a perfect dream a few nights ago. I dreamed you and I were married all over again, only somehow we'd turned into quite poor people. You had on a cheap Sunday suit of the fashion they wore in the year one, and, oh, my dear, the nosegay in your buttonhole! All the colors of the rainbow and the size of a cabbage! And I was in a bright blue dress trimmed with pink-and-white satin. positively glowed! Your hands were hard and horny, and mine were rough and red. We were driving from the church in a lumbering old country cab. As we went along, the cows coming out of a gate snorted at us as they do when they see something they're not used to, and going through the village, the children smiled at us and waved their hands.

"Our cottage was in a lane, and when

we turned into it, you reached up to a pink may tree and picked a big handful and put it in my lap. The cottage roof was all covered with lichen and honeysuckle clambered over the porch. We went in and had our wedding dinner and drank each other's health in elderberry wine. Oh, it was sweet and sticky! It must have got into my head. too, because when we strolled into the village afterward to do our shopping, the village shop seemed to have completely altered. It didn't keep any bacon or bread or brooms or bootsonly babies! The sweetest things! There were rows and rows of them on the shelves lying in pink cotton wool. tied up with true-lovers' knots, all waiting to be born. They were ticketed. 'Very Special. To be given away for love,' and while you were asking for a pound of tea, I took the prettiest one of them all—a splendid boy that held out his arms to me-and put him into my string bag. And then I woke up. But it's true, true, true!"

Chalfont gave her hand a convulsive

squeeze.

"Maggy, my darling! Are you sure?"

She nodded energetically.

"An heir! A son!" murmured Chalfont with tremendous feeling.

For a minute or two she lay passively in his arms, idly contemplating the outlines of the fine old house. At intervals during the last half hour, its windows had become illuminated. Here and there a gap showed. A row of six in the east wing remained dark.

"Oh, I've forgotten something!" she

exclaimed. "I shan't be long."

She rose and made for the house. Chalfont sat on. He was immensely stirred and elated at her news, but as yet he could hardly realize it.

The darkened east wing contained the picture gallery. On reaching it, Maggy switched on the upper lights, and as her eyes swept along the walls, it seemed

to her that the faces there turned to look at her. She had noticed that effect before, but it had never been so vivid as now. It gave her the impression that she was expected. She thought, too, that the portraits gave her a look of welcome.

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She went to the big carved chair that stood between the central windows and leaned on it, looking from face to face, trying to read their thoughts, as one does with living people. On her own face was the pent-up expression of a child bursting to impart a joyful secret. Did they know it? Did these noble ladies and courtly gentlemen share it? Did they sense the spirit of their newest and youngest lord?

"Oh, I must tell you!" she suddenly apostrophized them in tones of suppressed excitement. "You've always been so—so indulgent. It's true I've sometimes thought that one or two of you didn't quite approve of me, but you've never looked at me contemptuously. That's because you're noble. You're above the little meannesses of common people. You've even let me think you might, some day, get to let me belong to you. Are you listening?"

Perhaps it was not fancy; perhaps these ghosts of high degree were really waiting and willing to hear what this humble living member of their family had to say to them. At any rate, Maggy thought they were. Nothing could make her regard them as mere effigies.

"I've tried so hard to deserve to belong. I ran away because I was afraid of bringing disgrace on your honored name. Oh, it was a wrench to go! But it was all for the best, because nownow I think I do belong. There's a reason. Yes, I'm coming to it.

"For over forty years, no child has played here. My Chalfont didn't, because he didn't live here. So for ages and ages you've longed and hoped to see a child—one of your own race—romping under your eyes. You've longed to hear a child's voice and a child's laugh—noise.

"So now I feel frightfully proud—proud and bucked. You mustn't think it's swank. It isn't. And the pride isn't on my own account, only for"—she interrupted herself with a great sigh of contentment—"for my little son who's coming—the ninth viscount! I can't help rejoicing when I think of it! At last I'm a real Chalfont myself, with your own pure, precious blood flowing in my veins! It makes me catch my breath and feel exalted!"

Exalted she looked, the soft color coming and going in her cheeks, her eyes alight with an incalculable happiness.

As if wishing to share it, like a family honor, she went slowly down the length of the gallery, paused at each portrait, and made it a profound curtsy. But one she left out, that of Kate Gracious, the actress, who, some time about the middle of the eighteenth century had married the fourth viscount. When her homage to the others was completed, she returned to this one and stood erect before it, as one does before an equal.

The face, unpatrician, but very charming, smiled down at her. It seemed to Maggy to convey sisterly regard and comradeship. Like herself, this woman had belonged to the people; like herself, she had been an actress and had mated with the head of a great house. She had been a mother of Chalfonts and had shown herself worthy of her good fortune. Her portrait was there in proof of it. Maggy's portrait was there, too. She took comfort from the parallel. She threw up her head and gave the fourth viscountess a friendly nod.

"Oh, Kate, my dear," she cried, "wasn't it good to be alive—and loved?"



### The Flood of Life

By Frank R. Adams

H ERE are the embrasures for the cannon," the young man was saying, "all removed long since when the fortifications were dismantled in '67."

He was exhibiting the château to his friend, the old curé, who, strangely enough, had never visited at the lofty building that from the hill commanded

the tiny village.

"I think the sight of these vacant portholes, grown over with moss, has helped to make me dissatisfied." The young man patted affectionately the blind eyes of the castle through which the great guns had once looked out over the valley. "I'm too young to be shoved one side this way to take care of an ancient château that is never occupied. Day after day, I look out over this peaceful country. Sometimes it glows with splendid sunsets and sometimes it cowers sullenly under the lash of rain. But nothing ever happens. I unlock the great gates in the morning and I lock them again at night. Between those events is a dull blank. The count, my distant cousin, spends his time at Luxembourg, or, better, at Paris, and never comes here. Faith, I don't blame him! I should be there, too, if I might, where life is at its flood."

The old priest looked at him quizzi-

cally.

"This is better," he commented phil-

osophically.

"Better for you, perhaps," the lad retorted quickly. "You're old. You've lived, father, but I—why, since I've been grown, I've never even been to Luxembourg, and Paris is only a name for something I've never seen. Think, old man, how it is to feel the blood rushing through your veins and demanding excitement! Think of having strong young arms like mine, aching to hold the delights of the world tight in their embrace and fight the devil for

possession!

"Look at me," he went on with the garrulity of unspent youth. "I'm tall—six feet—and strong—I can throw a hundredweight across the old moat—I can ride, shoot, and hold my own with the foils or broadsword. Because I am an Eckerburg, I was brought up with all the accomplishments of a gentleman, and then, because they didn't need me, I was left to rot here and eat my heart out with envy. In my veins is the blood of kings—some of it tainted with the bar sinister, but royal none the less. In my veins the blood of kings and in my pocket the purse of a peasant!"

He led the way from the battlements into the great hall of the château. The shafts of sunset that struck on the far wall of the room, illuminating an immense fireplace, did not penetrate to the dim heights of the ceiling. From the wainscoting, however, it might easily be surmised that above were dingy rafters vaulted in the Gothic style. It was the room of another period, and little effort had been made to modernize it. There were no electric lights or steam-heating fixtures to destroy the illusion.

The younger man led the way up the wide staircase which made two right-angled turns before it reached the second floor. At each turn was a landing.

All of the spacious chambers were exhibited in succession, and tales told of the illustrious persons who had occupied them in the good old days.

The relationship between the two men was a curious one. They represented opposite poles. One was eager, the other resigned; one wanted to see, and one had seen too much; the life of the lad was all before, that of the priest lay behind. Still, something had drawn them together. Possibly it was the cure's pity for the young man, who was so lonely in this forgotten castle. At any rate, the lad had often sought the companionship of the cleric at his humhle home in the valley and had told him of his hopes and fears as he might have told his own father had he known for a certainty who he was. Now, for the first time, he had enticed the old man into returning his visits.

When they had been through all the rooms of the château, the young man stopped in front of a heavy door on the second floor, at the other end of the hall from the head of the stairs.

"This used to be a secret passage," he explained, opening it, "but the sliding panel that covered it was changed to an ordinary door when the place was disarmed. The tunnel that starts here runs into the hill in back of the château and comes out on the other side. Every one in the village knows about it now, but it used to be a very convenient exit for the garrison if things got too hot in here."

He slammed the door shut with a bang and led the way downstairs once more, where he cast himself disconsolately into a great carven chair and waved his guest to a similar seat facing him.

"We'll have supper presently," he announced, "and then, if you will, you may tell me something of the world you knew when you were young. I think I should like to have lived then. Men settled their difficulties more often with the point of a sword. Now they write papers about their troubles, and whoever has the most ink wins."

"'Tis a better way," the priest sighed.

"I served in the Franco-Prussian War and I shall never forget."

"That's it, you see." The young man sat up eagerly. "You have served. You're content. But I have no past to solace me. If I weren't dependent on my family, I'd leave here in a minute, but there's a certain pride of race about even the humblest of us Eckerburgs that makes us stick to the stronghold that bears our name. Just for that, I'm little better than a caretaker for my cousin, who roams the earth in search of thrills—and gets them, too, unless gossip is a long way astray."

He stared moodily at the woman servant who entered at the far end of the hall and began to set the big table with service for two.

"But the count's gayest days are over." He chuckled. "He's to be married to-morrow. Poor girl!"

"Why do you say that?"

"I'd say that about any woman who was destined to live with my cousin, but this one—Lord help her!"

"I'm afraid," the curé began doubtfully, "that I haven't heard——"

"She's the daughter of a wealthy south-of-France wine merchant, bourgeois, but rich—and William, my cousin, needs the money. Poor girl, I suppose the title dazzled her parents. It was all arranged, I believe. William didn't have time to attend to the details himself, and left them to a lawyer. They're to meet in Luxembourg for the first time to-morrow."

The young man and his guest were just about to sit down to their supper at one end of the huge table, which was now dimly lighted with two candles, when the sound of a motor signal on the roadway halted them.

"That's strange," said the young man, knitting his brows in a puzzled frown. "We're so far off the main road that automobiles seldom visit us."

The signal was repeated.

"Let's look," he continued, with the

eager curiosity of a child.

They stepped to the doorway. On the winding road that led up from the village, two brilliant shafts of light from an automobile's headlights curved and twisted up the tortuous approach. In a moment a car pulled up and stood in the courtyard, panting from the climb. Two men dismounted, and one of them began unloading hampers.

The other spoke a few words to the chauffeur—who departed immediately afterward—and then, beating the dust from his long coat with his gloves, climbed leisurely up the broad steps to where the young man and the priest

stood.

"Surprised to see me, cousin?" he said in a jeering voice, a cross between the bantering tone one would have used with an equal and the patronizing tolerance of a superior to a servant.

"I hardly expected you, sir," the young man replied. "I'd heard you are

to be married to-morrow."

"So I am." The other man drew off his light coat and tossed it to the woman servant who was busy around the supper table removing the dishes which had been intended for the young man and his guest. "Worse luck!" he added with a sigh. "Who is your solemn friend?"

He glanced negligently at the curé. His cousin introduced them.

"My friend," said the count, "you dampen my spirits. You remind me of cages, iron bars, and marriages. I wish I could forget them. If I had a thousand francs to my name, I would—at least for a week longer."

At this moment a manservant entered with a many-branched candelabra, which he placed on the serving table. He also went around the room lighting candles here and there until the chamber was broadly illuminated.

In the brighter light, the two cousins stood examining one another. In contrast to the height and brawn of the young keeper of the château, the count, his cousin, was wiry and quick rather than strong. His face, though fair, lacked the healthy look of the other, albeit his expression was cheerful with the gayety that comes from lack of feeling for others.

"If you're to be married in Luxem-

bourg, then what---"

"What am I doing here at Eckerburg?" the count took up his question. "I motored down to meet my bride, They're to get off the train here and stay the night at the château, and then we shall all drive to Luxembourg tomorrow. That is," he added gayly, "if she is not too hideous. She would have to be very ugly, though, for me to give up her father's millions. Stop wearing that heroic expression, François! I may be a trifle villainous, but you make me feel extra bad when you look so virtuous. I'm only doing what every noble family must once in a while-I'm renewing our financial and physical health with a peasant alliance." The count shook the younger man playfully by the shoulder. "Now, if you don't 'mind, my little cousin, we'll put things in order to receive the future Countess of Eckerburg."

In honor of the occasion, the finest table linen was spread for the feast and the family plate—what was left of it—was removed from its velvet-lined cases. The count had brought his own chef with him, and that individual was already busy in the kitchen with the collation that had come in the hampers, grumbling with every step because of the medieval inconveniences of the kitchen. By the time he was ready, the car swept up the approach once more.

The count stood at the top of the steps, but made no move to welcome his guests. His young cousin looked at him doubtfully for a moment and then descended quickly to the car door and drew it open. A pompous middle-aged man

descended. He wore a skirted coat and a silk hat, both incongruous for traveling, but the necessary badge of a Frenchman who deems himself important. He was stout and fussy.

"Come, Marie," he said, extending his hand to the other occupant of the

car. "We have arrived."

A tall woman in a loose traveling cloak and swathed in an automobile veil descended from the car. The young man led the way up the steps.

"You are the Count of Eckerburg?" the male visitor began diffidently.

"I am the count," said the man at the top of the steps, greeting them without holding out his hand, but bowing formally to both of them. "You are Monsieur Jean Cailler?"

The other man bowed his acknowl-

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"This is my daughter, Marie," he continued.

The lady nodded as formally as the count himself. The count laughed.

"And this, mademoiselle," he said, indicating the young man, "is my distant cousin, François of Eckerburg. It is only fair to say that my charming cousin might have been somebody some time if I had not found you, my doubtless charming fiancée." He indicated whimsically the veil that concealed her "But your sons and mine features. will be a terrible disappointment to him," he went on mockingly, "so you must be prepared to meet with my cousin François' disapproval."

By common consent, they all moved into the main hall, and without discarding the veil, the lady permitted herself to be led upstairs by the serving woman, who had been instructed which room to prepare for Mademoiselle Cailler.

While she was gone, the manservant brought in a decanter and glasses. Monsieur Cailler, who seemed ill at ease, took a stiff drink, as if to prepare himself for a coming ordeal, and the

count, with none too steady a hand, poured himself a similar ration. François and the priest declined.

"Why so abstemious, my dear cousin?" inquired the count in mock sur-"Shall I not pour you a small prise.

apéritif?"

François shook his head.

"Oh, well, then," the count sighed, "I shall have to drink two to make up. It's too bad, François," he went on reflectively, "that you have never been trained in the vices of a gentleman. You know, after all, you are an Eckerburg. At least you are part Eckerburg. I never was quite sure who your father was. Are you?"

The face of the younger man darkened with sudden anger, but he held

his tongue.

"No offense meant," said the count, with a pretense at geniality. "In these modern days, one man is as good as another. It must be so, or we three would not be here together as equals. Monsieur Cailler?"

The Frenchman assented without understanding the question. The sarcasm of the count, which he might have resented at another time, passed entirely over his head because of his agitation.

He had a long nose and a bald head sloping slightly backward. The first impression one got when he took off his hat was what an excellent toboggan slide it would be from the crown of his head to the tip of his nose. His eyes slanted slightly in the same general direction, and his skin was pale and Obviously, he was a man colorless. who had been used up by the machine of business. On his face was written the sign that the hospitals would get him as soon as he relinquished his grip on the money-making devices which were under his control.

The manservant took the glasses respectfully and inquired of the count in an undertone how many places he

should set at the table.

"Five," responded the count loudly. "We shall all eat together because we are equals. Surely the illegitimate son of an Eckerburg is as good as the daughter of a millionaire."

"What do you mean?"

François took a step forward with fists clenched.

"Tut, tut, my cousin!" the count laughed.

The young man felt a restraining touch on his sleeve.

"The lady," whispered the curé. The boy dropped his hands to his sides and stepped back once more.

On the stairway she stood, uncertain whether to descend the last three steps or retain her position of advantage. Apparently she sensed the trouble in the air.

Something about her pose suggested the Empress Louise. She might have been an empress, too. It was hard to credit the relationship between this girl and the pompous merchant who was her father. She was taller than he and exquisitely molded. Her eyes and hair were dark and soft, and her profile had the clear-cut beauty of a head on a coin. She wore a dinner gown of soft yellow, which left her arms and shoulders bare. Around her neck was a single strand of small pearls, which brought out the luster of her yelvet skin.

Even the count was affected by the poise and beauty of the girl who was to be his bride. He stood for a moment devouring her perfection with his eyes; then he offered her his arm, ironically.

"I have done my cousin the honor of inviting him to dine at the same table as ourselves." He indicated carelessly the young man, who stood fighting back his anger by the side of the priest. "But if you say so, I will rescind the invitation."

The girl cast a quick look at François. "I should be delighted to have him near me," she murmured.

"See, François," the count jeered,

"you have made an impression! Best be careful or I may get jealous!"

"Dinner is served," announced the man.

Still on the arm of the count, the girl was led to the table. She sat between the two Eckerburgs. Her father was on the count's left, and the curé was between François and Monsieur Cailler.

The count monopolized the conversation, as was to be expected. At first, he used up the commonplaces of weather, travel, and so forth, which any attentive host might select as the proper conversational method of placing a guest at ease. Then he spoke of the château itself—of its importance as a fortress in former times, of the departure of the garrison in '67, and the disarmament of the grand duchy.

"We have nothing left but a few pike poles and swords which we use for wall decorations." He waved negligently at the weapons crossed above the mantelpiece and at intervals between tapestries around the great hall. "Those weapons," he went on, "are the fighting tools of another race. None of the Eckerburgs of the present time could handle swords of that size."

"I can," blurted out François, moved by some boyish impulse.

The girl turned toward him with a kindling eye and noted the well-knit strength of his graceful figure. He looked younger, even, than she, and his eye met hers steadily and with mounting fire.

"Oh, ho!" said the count. "You've

been practicing!"

"There's nothing else to do here," the younger man assured him modestly.

"Too bad," commented the count cynically, "that the repeating rifle has made the swordsman practically useless. In the days of D'Artagnan, my dear cousin, you would have been a devil of a fellow. As it is"—he shrugged his shoulders—"you are buried here in an abandoned château, waiting for me to

die, which"—he poured himself another glass of wine—"I do not intend to do." He drew from his coat pocket a tiny automatic revolver of small caliber. "So you've been practicing," he repeated. "And yet this apparent toy that I can carry hidden in my pocket makes me your superior in strength and skill. Ah, romance is dead! Cash and gunpowder will win over you swashbucklers every time."

Stung by his covert insults, the young man started to push back his chair from the table. But all at once he paused. Beneath the cloth he felt his hand grasped firmly by the cool, slim fingers of the girl next to him.

"Wait," she whispered in an under-

tone.

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He subsided and drew back to the table. He felt that his beating heart must show in his temples. Never before had he experienced that kind of a thrill. By some unerring instinct, she had picked him out for her cavalier, and he knew it. Possibly it was because he was so simple and inexperienced that she recognized him as fit prey for a woman's wiles. This was the first doubt that assailed him. But a second thought convinced him that he had been chosen simply because of his superior strength.

The meal progressed. The count helped himself to more wine from the decanter, which he had ordered left at his elbow, and invited the others to share with him. Monsieur Cailler, who kept the silence of a frightened rabbit, drank moderately. The others refused. The only effect liquor seemed to have on the count was to make his tongue more biting and to increase the flow of covert insults which played in an unending stream about his cousin, his bride-to-be, and his future father-in-law.

The duty of the curé throughout this dagger-tipped meal was to keep up a steady flow of commonplaces, which

filled in the vitriolic gaps in the count's discourse. Thus, when Eckerburg was telling with unfeigned delight how he was going to spend the hard-earned wealth of Monsieur Cailler, the priest would be telling a peasant anecdote of the south Luxembourg wine country.

At last the coffee had been served. Everything had been cleared away except the wineglasses. The count rose with a glass in his hand.

"Before we part," he said, "every one must drink a toast to the happy day that

is to come. Gentlemen, to your feet!"

All rose at his request, and even François and the curé touched their lips to the brimming glasses.

"And now," the count went on, smiling wickedly to himself, "lest Mademoiselle Cailler feel that she has been slighted, it is no more than fair that her prospective bridegroom should give her the kiss of welcome to the Eckerburg family. Mademoiselle, your lips."

The girl went pale, but, obedient to a look from her father, she tilted her face and closed her eyes. The count put his arms across her shoulders.

"You sly dog, François!" he jeered at his cousin, who stood on the other side of the girl, tense and motionless. "You envy me, but you dare not take her from me! First love is a beautiful thing, and I wish I were going to enjoy this as much as you would."

The strain broke. François' arms reached out and roughly pushed away the face of the count. He staggered, cursing.

"What have you done?" the girl said, opening her eyes in frightened appeal to the young man.

The two cousins stood glaring fixedly at one another.

All of a sudden, they became aware of a witness standing in the doorway, who had entered unannounced.

"I beg your pardon," said the intruder, first in German, then in French.

The group, halted in mid-action, turned to him in surprise.

It was a young man in a gray military uniform, with pleasant blue eyes and a curly blond mustache. His clothes were slightly dusty, and a long army saber trailed at his side. Stupefied silence greeted his opening remark.

"General von Heermann presents his compliments," the officer went on, "and wishes to quarter some of his officers in the château."

The count, more or less demoralized by drink and the blow from François, was nevertheless the first to recover the power of speech.

"My God, you are a German!"

The officer bowed pleasantly.

"Then what are you doing here?"

"Crossing to France."

"But you can't. Luxembourg is neutral. You have no right."

"But we have orders," the German insisted politely.

"This is an outrage!" the count raved. "I refuse!"

"Better not," cautioned the young soldier.

"Why not?" returned the count.

"Because you will only lose anyway. There is an army of one hundred thousand men passing through Eckerburg, Listen. You can hear them."

In the tense stillness of the night, up from the valley below came the dull rumbling of countless wagons and artillery carriages across the solitary paved street of Eckerburg. Occasionally, from far off, could be heard the sound of many men singing.

"Besides," said the officer significantly, "if you do not make any trouble, your women will not be molested." He threw a glance of undisguised admiration at the girl who stood beside the count. "Otherwise—"

He left the sentence unfinished and shrugged his shoulders.

"I can't believe it. There is no war."
"There will be."

The girl seemed galvanized into sudden realization of what was happening

"They are marching on France," she exclaimed in a horror-stricken voice, "with a hundred thousand men!"

"With a million men," the officer corrected. "This is only a division of a

single army corps."

"Father," the girl cried pleadingly to the pale Frenchman, who was now visibly shaking with nervousness and excitement, "they are marching on France, and we are here in the midst of the Germans, helpless!" She turned to the lad on her left and searched his eyes desperately. "You?" she asked. "Your name is François. You are not a German?"

"No." He drew himself up proudly, "My great-grandfather fought with Napoleon."

The girl thanked him with a look of grateful relief.

"I'm glad there is some one we can trust."

"Come, gentlemen, this is not so serious," said the young officer, who seemed determined to be pleasant. "We have no desire to make war upon the people of Luxembourg. We will pay for what we take, and no one shall be harmed. That is, of course, if you make no resistance."

The cloud shifted back over the count's intellect. His head, which had been magically cleared of the fumes of liquor by the startling appearance of the young soldier, was now becoming muddled again.

"Go away," he said, picking up the small automatic revolver from the table. "Can't you see I am about to kiss a lady, and it's none of your damn' business? Go away, I say, or——" He handled the revolver menacingly.

The German officer thought it a joke and started toward the count impulsively. As he did so, there was a slight cough from the automatic.

All turned toward the count in sur-

prise. No one had thought that he would really pull the trigger. Apparently he had been of the same opinion himself.

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"My finger slipped," he explained weakly; then, turning toward the officer, "You will pardon me, sir."

The young officer stood silent with a surprised smile on his face, and then, while they watched, waiting for him to speak, he slid to the floor, his saber crashing heavily on the wood.

The group stood frozen, all but the curé. He hurried around the table to the side of the fallen man and placed his hand over his heart.

His was the first spoken word: "Requiescat in pace."

"He is dead?" questioned the count, scarcely alive to the situation.

"Yes," said the priest.

The girl buried her face in her hands to shut out the sight.

"What shall we do?" her father demanded.

There was no time for debate. At the door appeared a second officer, also in a gray uniform, with a drawn sword in his hand.

"What means this?" he asked, taking in the prostrate body of his comrade on the floor. "Who did this?"

François was the only one who could act. The others appeared to be paralyzed. He leaped across the table and, bending over the slain officer, yanked his sword from the scabbard.

"Close the door," he commanded.

The curé obeyed. The German drew a revolver. François sprang toward him and, with a single slash of the long sword, knocked the firearm from his hand. The German appeared to be too surprised to use it. The sight of a dripping cut in his left hand, however, spurred him to action, and with a cry he made a sweeping pass at his opponent with his saber.

François parried and the impact of the steel rang through the hall.

The German was a good swordsman, but he lacked the reach and strength of François. As a consequence, the young man backed him around the room, over chairs, tables, cabinets, and taborets.

The German knew he was outclassed. He must have known, also, that half a dozen times during the encounter the young man could have finished him. At any rate, he maneuvered his retreat in such a way that he got his back to the door. There for an instant he made a desperate rally and beat back the raining blows of the other; then, with a quick movement, he jerked open the door and was gone down the steps before François could recover. The curé methodically locked the door.

"Do you think he will come back?" questioned François, wiping the dripping perspiration from his face.

"Surely," replied the priest. "Did I not tell you I fought against them in '70?"

The Frenchman came toward them. "We will all be killed!" he cried.

The girl laid a restraining hand on his arm.

"It doesn't matter, father."

For answer, there was a rapid pounding on the door.

"Open!" said a voice. "Open, or we will fire through the door!"

The count advanced toward the entry.

"Perhaps we'd better let them
in—" he began.

"No," protested the priest. "They'll kill us all for reprisal."

"Then what?"

"We might better die fighting."

François had already picked up the revolvers belonging to the two German officers and was now examining their mechanism.

"Offer them money," said the Frenchman, wringing his hands in terror.

The count looked at him with a sneer.
"Money? Did you think you could
buy everything for so many francs? I
suppose I taught you that lesson, and

maybe you are right. You bought my honor, and surely the honor of an Eckerburg is worth more than your life."

With an access of sardonic bravery, he turned and fired his puny automatic through an open panel in the door.

The reply was a fusillade from out-

Inside, the group scattered out of range, all except the count. He stood swaying and smiling in a direct line with the portal.

"Come away!" shouted the curé.

"I can't," repeated the count, still swaying drunkenly. "They've got me, I think."

He, too, slipped to the floor.

With a cry, François dashed to his side and dragged him out of range.

"Good boy," commended the count weakly. "The Eckerburg half of you is a brave man, I knew, but I begin to suspect that maybe even your father had a touch of red blood in him."

François bent over him fiercely.

"I'll make you take back those words!"

"You can't." The count shook his head.

"Why not?"

The count closed his eyes and did not answer.

"Speak!" said the boy.

The priest restrained him.

"He's dead."

Firing through the strong door seemed to have lost the savor of amusement for the party outside. The rattle of musketry was replaced by the heavy blows of an ax, which was being swung against the oak.

"If there is no hope," said the girl resolutely, "I am ready to die." Then she added significantly, "I should prefer that it were done by your hand rather than by theirs." She touched the young man lightly on the arm and her eyes rested soberly in his.

That glance gave him a new grip on life. He laughed.

"We aren't going to give up. Curé, do you remember the tunnel I showed you leading from the second floor through to the other side of the hill?"

"Yes."

"Take Mademoiselle Cailler and her father through it. As soon as you are out in the open country," you'll find many friendly places to obtain shelter for the night. In order to give you plenty of start, I'll hold the stairway for fifteen minutes. I can do that easily, and I'll join you at the Hotel de Ville at Luxembourg."

"Can't we all go?" objected the girl.
"I'm afraid not," replied François quickly, marshaling them in the direction of the stairway. "You and your father couldn't move as rapidly as they, and they'd catch us like rats in a trap. But I can easily hold them off here and then make a dash for it when I think you are safe."

The blows upon the door were heavier. The wood was splintering.

"You can run fast?" she questioned solicitously.

He smiled

"That's a curious question to ask of a man who is going to fight, but I assure you I can run like the devil."

She laughed, too.

"You don't seem to take this very seriously."

"This," he said soberly, "is the first moment that I've ever really lived in all my life—the first time I've ever been caught up by the main current. Heretofore, it has made no difference how I lived or died, but now my every move is vital, because it means safety to you."

"It means more than that," she whis-

It was spoken so softly and the noise at the door was so loud that he scarce heard, it but he forbore to ask a repetition for fear it might not be so. "Hurry!" he commanded gruffly, instead. "Every second is precious."

Partly from shyness and partly from real cautiousness, he turned his back upon them as they ascended the great carved staircase and turned a corner out of sight.

None too soon. The hinges gave way and the barred door fell crashing inward. For a few moments the Germans held back, waiting for some one to take the lead; then, shamed into action, they all crowded through at

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They ran here and there about the great hall, like dogs attempting to pick up the scent of game. Evidently theywere part of a cavalry regiment, as they carried short rifles and wore heavy sabers. They questioned one another excitedly in thick German. These were raw troops, unseasoned by battle, and this first quest of human prey had the fearful flavor of novelty to them.

At last their eager questions were answered. A great, strapping trooper, clumsy of foot, started up the stairs. A revolver cracked, and he fell at length on the first three treads.

The pack rallied at once to his support and jammed themselves unskillfully in an unmanageable mass on the stairs. When finally driven back by the sputtering fire from above, they moved down once more. They did not discover, until they got to the bottom, that half their number had been hit. It was practically impossible for the invisible marksman to miss them, and they were wedged in so tightly that the killed and wounded did not fall, but moved upright with the others.

When they discovered how many had been hit, they fired an impotent volley up the stairs. François, safe around the turn, laughed aloud for pure joy in the conflict.

The entrance of a group of officers put an end to the futile attack. One of them, evidently a cavalry commander, called to a noncommissioned officer in the attacking party and gave him a few brief orders. The subaltern returned to his men and summoned a half dozen of them by name. At his behest they left the château by the shattered front door.

This puzzled François. Could they know of the tunnel to the other side of the hill and had they been sent to intercept the fugitives? It seemed scarcely possible.

The officers who had entered last were laughing and joking as if nothing out of the ordinary were occurring. One of them, a trim, curly-haired young man with blue eyes and a ready smile, sat down at the grand piano, which was one of the château's few modern accessories, and began to pound out the chorus of "Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles."

Just for luck, François fired a shot at him, and the bullet struck in the piano, jangling the strings. The officer ceased abruptly and joined his companions who were out of range.

In a few minutes, one of the men who had been sent away returned and, touching his cap, reported to his superior. There was a hasty conference, and then the remainder of the squad moved toward the stairway, in open order this time. The group of officers, interested, looked on as at a play.

It seemed a shame to pick off those poor fellows. They were only obeying orders. But it was a case of "have to" for self-preservation. François found himself counting out as in a childish game in order to decide which one to drop first. He had only seven cartridges left. When those were gone, he would break for the tunnel and run for it. It was absurdly simple.

With careful aim, he picked off the sergeant in command, then a little fellow with a dirty yellow beard. His next shot was wasted on an overgrown youth, who pressed on, apparently un-

aware that he was hit. He managed to convince the fat trooper who stood next that he meant business. In answer to François' shot, he rolled unobtrusively to the bottom of the steps.

Why did they not turn back? What a foolhardy advance and to such little purpose!

Then he knew.

A noise behind him caused him to turn suddenly.

Creeping along quietly in back of him on the second floor were the half dozen soldiers who had been sent away. Fool that he was not to have guessed that they had been ordered to cut him offfrom above!

With a snarl of rage, he wildly fired his remaining shots in their faces and grabbed his heavy saber.

"Come on!" he dared them in French and German.

And they came on with drawn swords and clubbed muskets. Evidently an order had been issued to take him alive, for none offered to fire the shot that would have put a sudden end to the unequal conflict.

Scarce realizing the odds against him, François sprang from his improvised barricade at the top of the stairs and, whirling his sword over his head, charged them. For a moment they shrank from his onslaught, and he fiercely beat down the guard of two opponents at once who clumsily opposed him with the best they knew of simple cavalry swordplay.

François' heart leaped exultantly. Maybe he could cut his way to the tunnel yet and make a bolt for it. He renewed his efforts and laughed in the faces of his enemies.

"Take that, old friend!" he murmured caressingly as he slipped his sword point into the arm of a perspiring delicatessen merchant who was new to his uniform.

"And one for you, handsome stranger," he went on as he bestowed a slashing cut on the thigh of a pink-andwhite youth with an engaging smile, "Stand aside for the last of the Eckerburgs!" he shouted. "Spread your cloaks for a path! With my sword I knight thee for valorous conduct," he explained, distributing blows on the heads of his nearest adversaries.

Crash!

Everything turned black before him and he sank helpless to the ground.

A long time afterward, he awoke with an aching head and a dulled brain in a small room on the second floor of the château. He had a vague recollection of the fight and what had led up to it, but none of what had happened after that stunning blow on the head. He had probably been hit with a clubbed rifle, he conjectured.

It was dark in the room, but he felt his way to the door. It was locked. When he beat upon it, a soldier opened it a little

"Be quiet," the soldier admonished through the crack in the door. "The Herr General von Heermann sleeps in the next room."

"But what happened? What is to be done with me?"

"You have killed a number of the kaiser's soldiers and you are to be shot as soon as it is light enough to see. You will be an example to your countrymen not to resist. Do you wish food or drink?"

The young soldier seemed sympathetic and a trifle awed by his proximity to death. The campaign was only just beginning.

"No, thank you," François replied dully to the inquiry about refreshment.

The door was closed and locked once more.

So this was the end of his day on the crest of the wave. He regretted, in an indefinite way, that it was. His head ached too much for specific thought, but he felt that he was being cheated out of

something. It was not alone the girl whose life he had doubtless saved by holding the stairs, although the look with which she had parted from him still lived in his numbed brain. It was a general longing to drink deep of the life he had just tasted. She represented an awakened thirst that he was to be cruelly deprived of quenching. The impending calamity, as such, did not terrify him. He was only angry and resentful, like a child who has been called in before he has finished his game.

After a while, he dozed off again. His head was nodding when the door opened. He did not look up. If his guards wanted anything of him, he would know soon enough. His head

ached too much to raise it.

"François," said a kindly, gentle voice.

The boy looked up apathetically. "Who is it?" he asked. "Not the

curé?"
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"Did they catch you, then?" His senses quickened for a moment to the realization of the situation.

"No. We got away. The French people are safe at the village apothecary's."

"Why, then, are you here?"

"She sent me back to see what had become of you. She's nearly distracted with worry. Of course I found out what had happened. I told them that you were one of my parishioners, and they granted me permission to stay with you until the end."

"Then you know what is to happen at dawn?"

"Yes. I know even better than you. Now sleep if you can, and I'll stay here by your side. Remember this one thing when you wake up—you are Count von Eckerburg."

The lad propped himself on one elbow and laughed,

"Why, so I am! It must annoy my

cousin, wherever he is, to have me succeed him, even if only for a few hours."

"Think what that means."

"I can think what it might mean," the lad said bitterly. "It might mean everything that I have ever wanted. Why, I might even look at her with the chance of having my glance returned level. But what's the use? I'm the Count von Eckerburg. Yes. But for that reason I shall not hold my head a bit higher when the volley comes than if I were simply François, the dishonored offspring of the Eckerburg line."

"But remember," the priest repeated, "remember when you waken that you are Count von Eckerburg, and remember what that means. Promise."

The repeated words of the curé impressed themselves on the dull brain of the boy.

"I promise," he replied sleepily.

"That's right," the other went on. "Remember you are Count von Eckerburg."

In the darkness the boy could hear his friend repeating Latin prayers in a soothing monotone. They were doubtless for his soul, he thought, but they lulled his mind, and slowly he drowsed off into a deep sleep.

He woke with a start. The dawn was graying the windows. It must be quite light outside. What was it he must remember when he woke up? He had promised the curé something. What was it? He cudgeled his dazed brain. Now he had it. He was to remember that he was Count von Eckerburg. That was it.

Why?

He looked around to ask the curé. He was gone. That was funny.

The door of the room stood open. He heard the step of a sentry somewhere in the hall, but the man did not cross his line of vision.

Now he became conscious of a piece of paper in his hand. He raised his

arm to look at it. It was too dark to see what it was, but he noticed, even in the grayness, that over his arm was a black sleeve. His own rough garments were light brown. He looked down. He was completely clothed in the long, closely buttoned gown of a vil-

lage priest.

All at once he knew what had happened. He knew why the door stood open, why he was free, why he was to remember that he was Count von Eckerburg. He walked hastily out into the hall. No one stopped him. He started gently down the stairs. In the great hall of the château were the recumbent figures of German army officers sleeping. From the valley below came an undercurrent of rumbling cannon, still passing over the cobbled street of Eckerburg. It was a forced march, and only the officers rested.

At the front door was a sentry who offered to stop him and then smiled and stepped back as he recognized the cleri-

cal costume.

"Did you see a priest go out this way?" François asked quickly.

"No," the soldier replied. been no priest but yourself this way since dawn."

François had forgotten that he was wearing the curé's garments.

"Has any one gone out?" he faltered "No one but the poor devil that's going to be shot for sniping."

Shot! François' heart stopped beating. What did it mean? Why was be standing free and-

"I must go!" he exclaimed. "Where

is he?"

"In the road below," the sentry directed.

Even as he spoke, a sound came up from the valley like the ripping of cloth, and a vapor of white smoke hung for an instant in the air.

"It's too late."

The sentry shivered slightly as he shouldered his rifle and began walking

as if to keep warm.

With unseeing eyes, the young man in the priest's closely buttoned gown looked across the valley and along the narrow road, which was alive with an undulating gray serpent of sullen cannon, plodding infantry, and supply wagons moving relentlessly across the world.

At last his glance, tear-dimmed, dropped to the bit of paper in his hand, which he had clutched unthinkingly ever since he had wakened. It read:

"Your life is at its flood. Mine has reached the ebb."





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# Two Cents' Worth of Humaneness

By Octavus Roy Cohen



A MAMMOTH chocolate-layer cake bedecked with amazing curlicues of pink-and-white frosting and framed with an oval of smaller cakes of like species; a veritable mountain of bread loaves, each wrapped in oil paper as per municipal ordinance; a flat pan of considerable dimensions containing a single huge slab of professional angel cake; two trays of rolls; and—last, but by no means least—no less than four pans filled with hot-from-the-oven cinnamon buns. Over the unpretentious and not overclean window was the inscription:

#### A. KLOTZMANN

Bakery

Cakes, Pies, and etc.

The A. Klotzmann of the sign had departed, some four years hence, to the bosom of his forefathers and of his also-deceased spouse, leaving the bakery in the slender-fingered hands of his only child. Adolph Klotzmann, junior. A. Klotzmann, ex, had not done it willingly. It had annoved him, even on his deathbed, to think that his business was destined to crumble and pass away under the unskillful grooming of A. Klotzmann, junior. Not that the dear departed had not loved his son, but his mind had been sufficiently judicial to differentiate between paternal affection and business admiration. He had loved

young Adolph devotedly, but as for admiring his utter lack of business acumen—

"Ach, Adolph," he had said no less than a thousand times, "you got a great head for poetry, yes. But for business —nein!"

Adolph appeared from the deliciously odorous realms behind a tattered green curtain, bearing in his rather thin arms a tray of fresh crescent rolls. He deposited these on a cracked glass counter with an it's-got-to-be-done expression. Then, from a voluminous coat pocket, he produced a much-thumbed limpleather volume of Rabindranath Tagore's works and seated himself on a one-time four-legged stool, hoping against hope that no customers would interrupt. For a few minutes, he read contentedly. Then he fidgeted. had become conscious of eyes boring into the back of his head. He made a quick survey of the store. there. The feeling persisted, and he glanced toward the window. He let the volume fall to his lap.

She was not looking at him, but she undoubtedly had been. It was his turn to stare, and eventually he compelled her eyes to his. At sight of the blue rings beneath them, giving the lie to the flagrant, hyperfashionable garb, he forgot Rabindranath Tagore and became intensely, humanly curious.

Then, as if unaware that she had attracted his attention, the girl sidled toward the door. At the door, she threw her shoulders back, summoned an air of jauntiness, and swayed into the domain of A. Klotzmann, junior.

She tried to appear oblivious of the fact that his eyes were bent frankly upon her. She tried to make herself believe that he did not notice the pallor of her cheeks beneath their thin coating of rouge. He leaned over the counter and smiled in poor imitation of his

portly ex-father's manner.

"Yes, miss? Something you wish?"
She started slightly at the sound of his voice. It was resonant, musical, compelling. Above all, it was kind—infinitely kind. She fought back an almost uncontrollable impulse to snatch one of the cinnamon buns on the counter before her—to snatch it and cram it down her throat. The training of Broadway was strong in her, however, and she put her hands on her thin, flat hips, cocked her head to one side, and answered in the manner of her kind:

"What didja think I come in here for? To take the census?"

A. Klotzmann was obviously taken aback.

"Why-er-no. I imagined you

wanted to buy something."

"Honest? Say, you're a reg'lar little Sherlock Holmes, ain't you?" A light in the depths of her not unattractive eyes gave the lie to the jauntiness of her words and manner. Adolph maintained his smile of grave interest. "I want to find out something," the girl flashed, somewhat defensively.

"Yes?"

"Do you only cook them there cinnamon buns when all the old ones is et up?"

"Why, no, indeed. We bake them fresh twice daily."

"Whatcha do with the old ones-the stale ones?"

"Sell them, usually."

"Same price as the fresh ones?"

"No, indeed. The fresh ones are six for a nickel, the stale ones two for a cent."

"That's fine. Y'see, I got a little Pomeranian what likes cinnamon buns, and there ain't no use feedin' him the fresh ones, is there?"

"No. I shouldn't think so."

"He don't like them so much as he likes the stale ones, anyway. There's more crispiness to 'em, see?"

"Yes, I see."

She appeared to be debating with herself a question of considerable importance.

"How many," she inquired at length, "how many buns d'yuh s'pose a Pomeranian could eat?"

She warmed to his smile.

"I don't know, I'm sure, miss. You see, I've never had a Pomeranian."

"That's so. I don't s'pose a baker would have one. They're terrible swell. A young feller—a rich friend of mine—give this one to me. They got to be treated just so." Then, as if remembering an almost-forgotten subject, "S'pose you give me four of them there stale cinnamon buns."

"Certainly." He reached under the counter, extracted therefrom four cinnamon buns of the previous day's vintage, and wrapped them carefully. As he slid them onto the counter, she opened a one-time-German-silver mesh bag, sadly the worse for wear, took out a cheap leather coin purse, which she opened so that he could not see its contents, and produced two coppers.

"That's the price- Oo-o-o-h!"

One of the pennies lighted on its edge and proceeded to roll off the counter and bounce to the floor. She immediately gave chase, her interest suspiciously keen for the owner of a blooded Pomeranian. But she was not quick enough, or else the coin was too quick. It found its way unerringly, with a perversity peculiar to coins, to the single

knot hole in the floor of the famous A. Klotzmann—Bakery; Cakes, Pies, and etc. On the edge thereof, it spun tauntingly for a moment—then disappeared. She hoped that he did not hear the choked cry of disappointment she gave. She straightened, the color in her checks higher than before, and endeavored to speak with nonchalance.

"That was funny, wasn't it?"

"I'm sorry."

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"Hmph! Ain't no use in cryin' over lost pennies. What's a penny, anyway? Mebbe it was fate done that. Mebbe four buns would uv been too much for that dog o' mine. S'pose you just make that two buns instead of four."

"That'll be all right. It's under my

floor and-"

"Say, listen here, kiddo! I ain't askin' you to give me no buns, see? I'm buyin' em. An' two is all I want. Get that? Now get busy an' take two out of that package."

Their eyes met for a moment and held. In hers he saw the pride spark flashing dangerously. In his she saw an embarrassing understanding and infinite fellow feeling. What he said

"Contribute I manut no offense

"Certainly. I meant no offense."

He took the little package from the counter and disappeared behind the green curtain. In a half minute he was back with another package. This she felt tentatively.

"You ain't tryin' to slip nothin' over on me, are you? There ain't but two

in here?"

"That's all. Only two."

"Thanks. Ta-ta!"

"Good day, miss. I hope the dog enjoys them."

She whirled suddenly, met his gaze, and colored.

"Oh, he will. He likes cinnamon buns."

He stood motionless as the front door closed behind her. As she swung down the street, swaying slightly from her immature hips, he walked slowly to the window, stepping upon the forgotten and indignant copy of Tagore. He watched her until she reached the corner and disappeared. Then he sighed deeply, smiled—as if at a gay little joke that he alone understood—and returned to his chair behind the counter. But Rabindranath Tagore remained on the floor.

Once safely out of sight around the corner, the girl quickened her pace. One block she walked, two, three. She came at length to one of the little parks that are set in the gray mass of the city

like emeralds in dross.

It was a bright, gay little park, a park on which the sun shone in comradely fashion, which was hemmed about with small trees and velveted with smooth grass. There were nurses there with babies and carriages and mothers with their progeny and no carriages. Children romped and played about. Old men walked arm in arm and talked of days gone by. Human derelicts dozed forgetfully in the sun. A burly, lantern-jawed policeman tickled a crowing infant with his nightstick.

The girl seated herself on a vacant bench in the corner of the park. She ripped the paper from her precious little package, lifted one of the crisp, crumbling cinnamon buns, and bit deeply into it. She chewed ravenously, and as she chewed, she flamed inwardly.

"I knew it!" she muttered to herself.
"That guv gimme fresh ones!"

She was entirely too hungry to figure the whys and wherefores. She bit again and again, masticating each mouthful with the relish of a gourmet. She had heard somewhere that the more chews per mouthful, the greater the nourishment to be derived. And, of course, it lasted longer.

She bit once again—— She snatched the bun from her mouth with a little scream of surprise. Her teeth had met on a surface uncompromisingly hard. She introduced a tentative, inquiring finger—then another. They met on the foreign matter and extracted it.

In the palm of her hand lay a bright,

new silver dollar!

"For the love of-"

Quickly she broke open the second bun. Another silver dollar. Two tears trickled from the corners of her eyes.

"An' I thought that boob swallowed that stuff about me wantin' 'em for a

pup!"

Being a very practical—and extremely hungry—little body, she finished the business in hand. When that was done, not so much as a crumb remained of the two buns. She crossed to the municipal drinking fountain—one of those stone-and-china devices that squirt into your mouth if your mouth happens to be in the right spot—and finished off her meal in style. Then she returned to her bench and solemnly went into executive session over the two silver dollars.

She wanted them. She needed them. It was charity, but the worst of charity is the embarrassment felt at the time of receiving, and that had been done away with. She fought with herself and determined to keep the money. It meant for her a new, if slender, lease on life.

So she was distinctly surprised to find her footsteps wending in the direction of A. Klotzmann—Bakery; Cakes, Pies, and etc. She flushed a bit as she realized that she wanted to see "that funny fish" again. Probably her desire to see him was founded upon the treatment he had accorded her. He had treated her—oh, differently.

Adolph Klotzmann was staring moodily at the ceiling when the door slammed open. He rose to his feet to stare into the eyes of the girl of the cinnamon buns. The color of her cheeks he mistook for anger, and he was too little versed in the ways of womankind to know that the apparent viciousness with which she slapped the

two silver dollars on the counter was not viciousness at all, but embarrassment.

"There's your money, and I'm no charity case."

The man colored and fidgeted awk-

wardly.
"I didn't mean to offend—really."

"Then whatcha do it for, huh?" He glanced at her keenly.

"You enjoyed the buns?"

"Yes." She flushed at the ease with which she had been caught. "I give 'em to the dog."

"Hm! The crumbs on your mouth

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Silence, a very brief silence. Her attitude changed. She became belligerently defensive.

"Well, what if I did eat 'em, huh? Did it hurt you any? Didn't I buy 'em? Did you have any call to gimme charity because I happened to be broke?"

"Yes—and no. If I've offended you, I'm sorry. But these——" He picked up the silver dollars and let them jingle to the counter again. "It wasn't charity; it was a loan."

"Yeh!" she jeered. "A loan! I never did see a Dutchman yet made a

loan like that."

"I wish you would take them," he insisted earnestly. "You need them and I don't. Really I don't."

"And neither do—— How you know I need them?"

"I know it—because—— Well, when a pretty young girl comes into a bake shop to buy two cents' worth of stale buns, she's in a pretty bad way. I'd hoped you would say nothing about—these and that they might do some good."

Her face softened momentarily.

"I understand—and I'm awful much obliged. Say, who slipped an' made you a baker?"

"What's that?"

"Somebody slipped a cog when you

got into the business. How'd it hap-

He smiled with real amusement.

"Inherited from my father."

"It fits you! Yeh, like a ready-made, unaltered suit it fits you! You look like a—a—a pianist."

"Thank you. I---"

A little girl entered the store and demanded a dime's worth of crescent rolls. The package was duly handed her and, because she looked longingly at the pan of crullers, Adolph Klotzmann handed her two of them. She smiled, dimpled, and ran out, chuckling delightedly.

"An'," continued the girl earnestly, "when you give that kid them two doughnuts, you give away the profit on

them rolls, didn't you?"

"Why, yes-I suppose so."

"Swell business man you are! A sucker, that's what! Why'd you do it?"

"She expected it. It's lots of fun, too, having all the kids like you."

"What you need, Mr. Klotzmann—gee, what a name for war times!—is a manager. You need some one to run your business while you go moonin' around the river singin' songs an' writin' stuff."

The man's face brightened under the spur of inspiration. He became almost modernly human.

"You're right! I do need a manager. A—er—a—person with a level head on her—his—shoulders."

"Betcha life you do! Otherwise your creditors'll be holdin' a patriotic mass meetin' with you as the object of the gatherin'. Then along'll come a sheriff with a hammer an' a sign, an' A. Klotzmann will be flooie!"

The prospect of being closed out didn't seem to bother Adolph Klotzmann to any considerable extent. He was in the grip of an idea.

"As you say, I do need a manager. If I could only find the right per-

son—" And then, as if with a new idea, "Why don't you take the job?"

"Why don't— What? Say, whatcha tryin' to do? Kid me?"

"I'm serious. Really. I wish you would take it."

"Say, on the level, Klotzy, are you tryin' to make Pansy Farron a baker lady? Or is this just a new way of playin' the game?"

"Playing what game?"

"Oh, you know—button-buttonwhose-got-the-button. The same ol' game that Adam an' Eve played."

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Ain't you the ignorant thing, huh? If you don't understand, I guess you're on the level. An' I guess you're just about as safe as Geoff."

"As who?"

"Geoffrey. Never mind his last name. You'd reckernize it, an' maybe he wouldn't like that. He's a gentleman friend of mine—a swell feller, really. If he ever seen me handin' out rolls and buns, oh, my Gawd, he'd drop dead, honest!"

"The position wouldn't pay very much"—Klotzmann was sticking to the subject in hand—"but the work wouldn't be hard, and the position would have perquisites."

"Meanin'?"

"Permission to eat the entire stock if you're able."

Her eyes met his, and suddenly she threw back her head and laughed ringingly.

"Darned if I don't believe you're on the level!"

"I was never more serious in my life."

"You're sure?"

"Positive."

"Then shake!"

He clasped her tiny pink little hand in his, and they both grew very serious.

"It's a go, ain't it?"

"Exactly. You will assume your duties immediately. I'll give you full charge of the selling end, and-erwon't you take that two dollars on account on your first week's salary?"

She inspected the money gravely,

then looked at him.

"There's one born every minute, Klotzy, but whoever was in charge went several better when they produced you." She laughed at the blank expression of his face. "Meanin' suckers," she amended.

"As to salary-"Bother the salary!"

"Eight dollars a week is all I can af-

ford right now and-"

"It's more than I've made in six. And if you've no objections, Klotzy, I'll eat another roll. Them two in the park just kinder roused my appetite. Ever been real hungry?"

"No. Unfortunately."

"I knew it. You're a nut. You don't wanna be-get that? It-it's-

"It must be very hard. And by the way, since you're my-er-general manager, mayn't I know your name?"

She giggled. "You may. It's Pansy Farron, as I

mentioned once before." "Pansy Farron—that's a mighty

pretty name."

"Yes," complacently, "that's why I took it. The folks wished 'Hazel' onto me. Believe me, Klotzy, I don't want to be named after no nut. There's more class to 'Pansy.' "

"Maybe there is," he agreed vaguely. "But somehow I've always liked

'Hazel,' too."

"On the level?" "Yes, really."

She sighed.

"I hate to let 'er go, but I guess I'm Hazel from now on.

"Indeed you mustn't-

"It'll pay for them buns, maybe."

"Hazel!"

"Yep! What is it now?" She placed

a doughnut effectively atop a pyramid of other doughnuts and admired the effect greatly. "Honest t' Gawd, now, Klotzy, ain't that swell?"

"It's very pretty. You're quite an artist, Hazel."

"Aw, quit your kiddin'! I'm just tryin' to be a good business manager. That ain't no more bein' an artist than washin' your plate-glass window was. I'm bettin', Klotzy, that that window never was washed since the old man shuffled off."

"I don't believe I ever thought of it." "Na-a! You never do think of nothin' but those foolish books of yourn. What good does a whole lot of wop poets do a guy in the bakery business? Huh? I ask you."

"They make him forget the bakery business, Hazel. It's a pleasant thing

-to forget."

She frowned in a puzzled fashion. "You talk like a crab-sidewise."

Whereupon she returned to her duties, at the moment consisting of the tacking of oilcloth on her shelves. His voice broke in on her labors:

"Hazel?"

"Yeh! Whatcha want now?" She surveyed his tousled hair from her point of vantage on the stepladder. For an instant there shone in her eyes a very soft light, the maternal light. "Spit it out, Klotzy."

"I've been thinking."

"Honest?" sarcastically. "That's all I've saw you do in the month I've been here. I could uv lifted the till seven times an' you never be the wiser. As a baker, Klotzy, you're a swell poet."

"It's not poetry I've been thinking of,

Hazel. Not this time." "What is it, then?"

"Humanity."

"Oh, Lud! You got 'em worse an' worser! You should worry about humanity."

should. We all should. You started me thinking"Me? Aw, say!"

"Don't you suppose there are lots of girls as much in need of food as you were that day you came in here—"

"And lost that penny down the knot hole?"

"Yes."

"A million-more or less."

"It's a terrible thing to think of people going without food when we have so much!"

"What you got to do with that?"

"I'd like to give some of it away." She descended the stepladder swiftly

She descended the stepladder swiftly and stood belligerently before him, arms akimbo.

"Klotzy, you give me a pain! A reg'lar pain! Say, if you was a diamint importer, would you be givin' away diamints just because you had a lot? I ask you, would you? These here rolls and bread is how you make your livin'. You make 'em to sell, not to give away. You got the ideas of a millionaire an' the pocketbook of a beggar. You better turn over, that's what. Sleepin' on the back never did no one no good."

He was quite unperturbed by her diatribes. He was somewhat used to them by this time, although at first they had rather swept him off his feet. He continued dreamily, just as if she had not

spoken.

"I was thinking that we might insert a small advertisement in the newspaper to the effect that after closing hour every night we'll give away all our stale bread—"

"Why don't you say all your profit an' be honest about it?"

"Profit? What do we care about profit, Hazel? All we need is enough to live on——"

"And you need a new suit of clothes an' new shoes an' a new hat an'—Lord knows what else!"

"We'll make our bread line for girls only. Don't you see—"

"Sure! I see all right, all right! I see a bunch of fly cops readin' that ad

an' pullin' us for another underworld investigation. I don't mind bein' no general manager of a bake shop at eight a week, Klotzy, but I draw the line at holdin' the spotlight before the vice commission."

"We might save a lot of girls from—oh, well"—he flushed—"from things

worse than-than-hunger."

"You're a simp!" she declared hotly.

"A plain, unvarnished, ord'nary, dyedin-the-wool boob! You ain't got the
sense a Hottentot baby is born with.
You oughta get a job in the public lib'ry.
A swell baker you are!"

"You don't like my idea?"

"I think it's rotten," she declared frankly.

"Hazel?"
"Yes?"

"That day you came in here—if we hadn't happened to get together as we have, what would you have done?"

Her face clouded and she looked away.

"I got a friend."

"What sort of friend?"

"A nice friend. Oh, don't look that way! He's a swell feller an' got more coin than he knows what to do with. I'd uy gone to him."

"Mmm! Why didn't you go in the first place, instead of trying to eke out your existence on two cents' worth of stale buns?"

"Didn't want to, that's all," she flashed defensively.

"Why?"

His level, incisive voice seemed to probe her innermost thoughts. She felt awkward and uncomfortable.

"I dunno. It might uv sorter—compromised me."

"You like this friend?"

"Heaps."

"He like you?"

"Pretty good, I guess."

"He wanted to marry you?"

"A man with a heap of money don't go around tryin' to marry ex-chorus girls. That ain't done, only in stories. I liked him fine, an' he sort uv cottoned to my curves. But there wasn't no marryin' about it. Understand?"

"Certainly. That's why I know you'll agree with that idea of mine about the bread line for girls. I'd have done it before, except for the fact that I never thought of it. You've waked me up to a great many things, Hazel. Not the least of which is a realization of the duty one owes his fellow men."

"Fellow women you're talking about."

"Yes—fellow women. Who knows but what other girls might be saved from the same thing you—"

"You make me tired, Klotzy! You an' your confounded what-y-call-'em."

"Logic?"
"Logic. It's so blamed true! O' course I agree with you, but d'yuh s'pose I wanna see you throwin' all your money away? What'd you do if it wasn't for this bakery, huh? What you s'pose your old man'd say if he could come back an' talk the proposish over with you? I'll bet right now he's kickin' the glass outen the coffin."

"And you agree that it would be a good thing?"

"Of course, but-"

"Then it's settled," he finished blandly. "I'll run down and insert the ad in one of the morning papers."

She found a mist before her eyes.

"Klotzy," she choked, "you're so doggoned good an' obstinate, I sometimes think you ain't human at all. An' sometimes I could—could kiss you!"

She disappeared hurriedly into the realms at the rear. He stared in bewilderment at the curtains through which she had gone, and was surprised to feel that his face was very hot indeed.

"I wonder—I wonder what made her run like that."

He thought it over for a few minutes. Whereupon, having arrived at no decision, he mooned his way down to the World office and inserted a carefully worded advertisement in the personal column. The clerk to whom he handed his copy read it carefully.

"Are you Mr. Klotzmann?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Wait a minute, please."

He was gone for several minutes. When he returned, he beamed with the knowledge of a good work well done.

"I've just spoken with the advertising manager, Mr. Klotzmann. He says we'll be glad to run this advertisement free of charge as long as you wish us to."

Klotzmann stared.

"That's awfully good of you, I'm sure. I—I—appreciate it. Thank you," He stumbled his way into the street and paused only once to soliloquize, "And they talk about soulless corporations!"

He gave orders to his head baker that night to bake extra quantities of bread. Next morning found him at the shop unusually early, and when Hazel arrived, he was gayly whistling a comicopera tune, a fact that startled her from her usual poise.

"What's the big idea, Klotzy, that you're whistlin' a reg'lar piece, instead of one of them ear-twistin' grand-opery things?"

"Happy," he answered laconically.

"That's good. Make the most of it while you've got a chance. When they swamp you with your bread line, you'll not feel like whistlin' anything but that there 'Dead March.'"

Her prophecy was partly fulfilled. Within fifteen minutes after the closing of the shop, Klotzmann had exhausted his stock of stale bread. Whereupon, he drew Hazel aside.

"There're twelve more out there."

"Yeh. I can count, too."

"They're hungry."

"Tough luck. They should uv come earlier."

"We've got plenty of rolls."

"Listen to me, Klotzy," she ordered sternly. "If I was to see you puttin' your head on the floor an' gettin' ready to cut it off with an ax, I'd try to stop you, wouldn't I?"

He smiled.
"I hope so."

"Then take my advice an' tell them there unfortunate dames to trot along home. Only," she added, "you got nothin' but a ball o' mush where your heart oughter be, an' you won't do it. Where's them rolls?"

He chuckled with the whole-hearted delight of a boy after Friday school. The twelve were appeased, as were two others, one of whom Hazel sternly declared was a repeater.

"We'll give her the benefit of the doubt," he argued. "Maybe she's not."

"Yeh, we're givin' 'em all the benefit of the doubt—an' about everything else we've got."

The first night of the bread line established it as an institution. A reporter with a nose for news found the little advertisement and descended in force upon the establishment of .A. Klotzman—Bakery; Cakes, Pies, and etc., and gave a half column of slush with a photograph of the store. The following night all records were broken.

It marked the beginning of the end. According to Hazel, Adolph had gone into the charity business to the exclusion of his patrons who paid money. He baked extra quantities daily, despite her raucous objections; and withal he whistled happily through the day and slept contentedly at night, apparently oblivious of the fact that his bank account was sadly depleted, and that there was no money to meet two notes which were coming due at the bank within another thirty days.

Hazel argued with him; she begged, pleaded, and cajoled, but to no avail.

"Where does it get you, huh—this bein' a sucker? It might buy you a ticket to heaven, but you ain't thinkin' of dyin' yet. D'you think them dames appreciate it? Some of 'em—sure, but most of them is workin' you for an easy mark. That Mrs. What's-'er-name from around the corner what always used to buy her bread is sendin' her thirteen-year-old kid here every evenin' to get it for nothin'. Why don't you wake up, Klotzy? There ain't nothin' to this here game, less'n you're a millionaire, which you ain't."

"I enjoy it, Hazel."

"Sure, an' you'd enjoy a limousine if you had one."

"For the first time in my life, I'm being of some use to some one."

"An' it won't get you one extra bean when you land in the almshouse."

"I can always work."

"How d'you know? You ain't never done it yet. Mark my words, Klotzy, one of these days sompin terrible's gonna happen."

Again Hazel proved her powers of prophecy. It was less than ten days later that Adolph Klotzmann—Bakery; Cakes, Pies, and etc., complained of feeling indisposed. Two days after that a doctor was summoned at Hazel's insistence and against Adolph's rabid objections.

"Typhoid!" pronounced the man of medicine, and Adolph Klotzmann was removed to a hospital.

Geoffrey Stanhope was a man of many affairs. He sat at his glass-topped metal desk poring over a mass of brokerage reports, his fine forehead creased in a frown. A dapper young clerk broke in on his absorption. Stanhope looked up and spoke irritably.

"I told you not to bother me, Jansen."

The color left the clerk's face.

"The lady says she must see you, sir."
"Dammit! I'm busy."

"I told her so, sir, but she says she's

busy, too. And"—the clerk strove to make his voice as impersonal as possible—"she says if you see her one minute, you'll forget you're so busy."

"Not from Wardlaw & Jenkins, is

"I asked her, sir, and she says not."
"Oh, well!" Stanhope tossed his
papers to the desk. "I've been interrupted. You may as well show her in."

The clerk retired, and within a half minute returned with the girl. At a nod from Stanhope, he withdrew again, after noting with some disappoinment that there seemed to be no sign of recognition in Stanhope's face. Alone with the girl, Geoffrey spoke, his voice unwontedly sharp.

"Well? What can I do for you?"

Hazel Farron crossed her cheaply shod feet and smiled her most attractive smile.

"Honest, papa," she said coyly, "you act like you ain't never seen me before."

Stanhope's eyes narrowed and he surveyed her more closely. He saw a small woman, perhaps twenty years of age, her face and manner denoting the proletariat, her garb somewhat tawdry and flashy. He noticed, too—being a keen observer—that she was immensely troubled about something. There were dark rings of worry under her eyes. Somewhere, somehow, he had met this woman before. She seemed to take his recognition for granted.

"Do I?" he countered.

"Yeh! You don't remember the 'Chicken Run' company an' that automobile party you give us over to Jersey?"

"O-o-h!" He whistled softly.
"You're— What's your name?"

"Haz—" She flushed and changed quickly: "Pansy Farron."

"Hmm! Yes, indeed." He scowled suddenly. "What is this? Blackmail?"

The girl smiled broadly.

"Do I look like one of them things, papa?"

"One never can be sure. If not, what do you want?"

"You remember that night—\_"

"Yes."

"You made me a proposition. It wasn't marriage, either. I turned you down, and you told me to consider it open. Here I am."

The man strove to conceal his amusement. In truth, he had forgotten the girl. The incident was clear enough in his mind. He was interested, principally from a sociological standpoint. And, too, the girl was not at all hard on the eyes.

"You mean-"

"I'm with you—if you'll agree to my terms."

"What are they?"

Geoffrey had forgotten business. He was enjoying himself as he would have done at a vaudeville show.

"It's this—— Lemme take ten minutes of your time, willya?"

"Go ahead."

The smile left the girl's face as she hitched her chair forward and lowered her voice. Then she plunged into her story.

She did not talk grammatically—she did not know how. But as he listened to the story of her near starvation, of her fight against herself and against the lure of comforts and luxuries which he had thoughtlessly extended to her, the smile left his face, too, and he grew very grave. He saw that the girl had taken him seriously—that she imagined she had loomed as large in his mind as he had in hers. She would never have believed that he had forgotten her with the coming of another day.

There was something pathetic in her way of telling the story, as if she were a jewel without price, ready to make the ultimate sacrifice to gain her ends. How ironical, he mused, that all this time she should have imagined him figuratively dogging her footsteps, eager to cause her to swerve from the path

of rectitude—she, whom he had forgotten, and who as yet was only a part

of a red-night memory.

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"An' the poor fish is sick," she wound up passionately. "My Gawd, he's sick! Not that he's dyin' at all, but he's still in the woods. An' what's it from, huh? He ain't been eatin' the right kind of food, because he's been givin' away every cent to a lot of moochin' dames with no more conscience to the square inch than a rooster has teeth. An' he'll come outa the hospital to find a sheriff's notice tacked up on the door like a bit of crape, an' himself without a roof nor a dollar—an' no work—an' his charity all gone flooie!

"He done it all because I started him. There ain't but one thing he cares about on earth an' that's his bread line. Gee, you'd oughter see 'em, papa, when they come along waitin' for his hand-outs—little pinch-faced ones with police-court records, an' mothers with squallin' brats in their arms an' husbands havin' an easy time in jail; an' little girls with their toes stickin' out of their shoes; an' old women an' fat women an' skinny women. Just women an'

women an' women.

"I useter think he was a sucker, an' I always told him so, too. But since he's been in the hospital, some of them dames have sent him things. One girl there, who looked like a mighty hard nut, brings him one carnation t'other day. Brung it to the hospital herself, too. Ashamed to bring that one flower? My Gawd, you don't know people till you see 'em hungry! Klotzy grinned all over when she come with that flower, an' the doc says it done him more good than all his medicines.

"An' she wasn't the only one. Some of them women with more children than the ol' lady in the shoe, they bring a coupla babies a day to see Klotzy. An' I'm a liar if them dirty-faced brats don't cheer him up wonderful! Yeh, I'm tellin' you, papa, that there man is an

angel. He ain't no human bein' at all. I'm for him strong—and I'm for his charity bread line. He ain't like me an' he ain't like you. He ain't like nobody that's been alive for nineteen hundred and seventeen years—that's what. Believe me, I wouldn't uv give in to you if it was for me; but I'm willin' to pay the price because I think you're a square guy an' because you got the money to do what I want."

"And that is?" The workaday world was a million miles removed from Geof-

frey Stanhope.

"You go down first off an' tell that sheriff to vamos. Clear the debts offen that bum shop. Then go to Klotzy an' let him know that you're a reg'lar philanthropist an' that you'll take over the bakery an' let him run it. See? Make it real charity-sell all your stuff at cost an' give away what's left over. That'd be doin' somethin' worth while with your money. I'm here bettin' you ain't never had no fancy dame comin' to bring you one flower an' sheddin' sad salt tears all over a clean sheet, nor fat women bringin' a lot of dirty, messy brats to see the guy what saved 'em from goin' where they'll all get in the end, anyway.

"If you'll do that, I'll play my part—an' no kickin', either. But don't you try nothin' but keepin' up that bread line of hisn. An' you keep your eye on it. If you give him a bunch of coin, he'll spend it in no time. You can do that thing an' see it's run right. I'll trust you that far because—mark my words, papa—when oncet you start you ain't gonna stop s'long's you got a dol-

lar. It-it-gets you-here!"

She paused abruptly and walked quickly to the window, her eyes blinking very fast indeed. The man spoke slowly.

"You are in love with Adolph Klotzmann?"

"In love? Yeh! Like I useter be in love with my religion."

"And he loves you?"

She laughed mirthlessly.

"Didn't I tell you that man ain't human at all? Him love me! My Gawd, Miss Agnes! Klotzy loves charity an' his bread line an' his foolish poetry stuff. He ain't got eyes for no single girl. It's like he says, papa. He loves humanity. That kinder went over my head the first time he spilled it, but bein' with him as long as I have, well, I understand a heap of things now I never understood before. Love me? Say, he don't know Hazel Farron is livin'."

" 'Hazel?' "

"That's my real name. He likes it better than 'Pansy.' He's that nutty." Geoffrey Stanhope smiled gravely.

"I see." He pondered briefly. "Listen to me, Hazel. I'll take you up on that proposition—just as you outlined it, and I'll put my end of it in writing. I'll trust you to keep your end of the bargain. You'll be mine, remember, to do with as I wish."

"You do your end of it, papa, an' I'll jump outa this here winder if you say the word."

The man lighted a big cigar.

"Hmm! Think of an ex-chorus girl and a crazy baker turning Geoffrey Stanhope philanthropist! The world is funny."

Her face was very serious.

"No-o, it ain't funny. If you knew him—it'd seem—natural. That feller—honest, he could make a wop throw a dish of spaghetti outa the winder. On the level he could!"

The line stretched from the front door of the establishment over which hung the same old battered sign,

### A. KLOTZMANN

Bakery

Cakes, Pies, and etc.

to the corner, and around that corner halfway to the next. In the line were

old women, young women, stout women, and thin women. The faces of most were pinched; all were more or less seamed with lines of care. Two policemen maintained order.

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At the head of the line, in the door of the bakery, stood a rejuvenated Adolph Klotzmann. His face shone as he passed out loaf after loaf, each handed to him by the fur-coated financier who presided over the trays of bread brought by the baking force from the rear. Something of Klotzmann's enthusiasm had been imparted to Stanhope. He had come once by way of curiosity. Now it had become an every-othernight affair. Geoffrey Stanhope was learning much about the lives of the great other three-quarters.

The last petitioner was satisfied-regally. She was a scrawny little girl, of an age anywhere between sixteen and twenty, hugging tightly an emaciated baby. She managed to carry with her the four loaves that Klotzmann pressed upon her at Stanhope's suggestion. Then the door was closed and the two men retired to the rear of the store.

Stanhope became strictly business. He instructed Klotzmann curtly as to the keeping of his books. When the final entries were made in the ledger, the two men rose—the portly, aggressive man of business and the slender, almost ascetic man of charity. It was Klotzmann who spoke:

"I didn't know there were many men of your stamp, Mr. Stanhope."

The financier flushed.

"I didn't know myself, Klotzmann. I've begun to realize that I'm fairly human. I enjoy this thing. I intend to keep it up."

"I'm mighty happy to hear that."

"Do you know"—Stanhope spoke rather sharply—"it strikes me that you're not as happy as you ought to be."

"I am—" Klotzmann's face flamed. "No, what is the use of lying,

Mr. Stanhope? There's something gone from my life. A girl. She used to work here with me. When I got out of the hospital, she was gone. I've hunted for her—— I suppose she thought my business had gone to smash and that she'd be a drag on me. If she only knew of you and what you've done for me!"

"I judge," said Stanhope gently, "that

you are in love with this girl."

"In love?" Klotzmann went a bit white. "Why, yes, of course I'm in

love with her!"

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"We'll have to find her, then," agreed Stanhope heartily. "I have a little apartment up in the Seventies. Suppose you trot up there with me. It's a modest little place, but it's cozy and will give us an opportunity to discuss ways and means."

They were whirled to the unpretentious apartment house in the palatial limousine and deposited before its portals by a discreetly wondering chauffeur. An elevator carried them to the fifth floor, and Stanhope unlocked the door of the apartment with a latchkey. It was then that he appeared to remember something that amused him vastly.

"Go on in and wait for me, Klotzmann. I want to go back for something I left in the car. I'll be right up. Go ahead, and," as the younger man appeared to hesitate, "and make yourself at home. And say! Look behind the mantel clock. You may find something there that will interest you."

Adolph Klotzmann entered the apartment and directed his steps toward the room at the end of the hall from which streamed a brilliant radiance. He moved slowly, timid and abashed by his strangely luxurious surroundings. At

the lighted threshold, he paused. The color drained from his cheeks. His eyes popped open and his jaw dropped.

Hazel turned. The new cloak still hung across her shoulders. Nerveless fingers released the hat they had held and it dropped to the floor, unnoticed. Her hand involuntarily went to her throat and she staggered slightly with the shock of surprise.

They stared through eyes into hearts. He took one happy, faltering step toward her—and she understood!

It was nearly an hour later that the delirious Adolph Klotzmann remembered that Geoffrey Stanhope was to have returned. He also recalled the mandate regarding the search behind the mantel clock. He searched and found there a small letter addressed to Hazel in Stanhope's handwriting, and a longer envelope which contained a legallooking document. They opened it together and together read the terms of a year's lease on the apartment, made out in Klotzmann's name and receipted in full. Then Hazel's letter:

You promised to do as I desired. If you are a woman of your word, you will see to it that Adolph Klotzmann uses the lease, and you will also marry him to-night. You can get a license downtown if you try hard enough, or, failing that, the license clerks over in Jersey are famously willing. I wish you all the happiness I know will be yours.

Stanhope was speeding toward his home on the Hudson. A grim smile crossed his lips, a quizzical light twinkled in his eyes.

"A crazy baker and an addle-pated chorus girl!" he muttered idly. He relaxed against the luxurious upholstery.

For once in his life, Geoffrey Stanhope was contented.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

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### ALAN DALE

THEY say that the theatrical manager is keenly on the lookout for novel ideas; that, with that end in view, he feverishly examines every manuscript sent to him; and that he clamors to pay royalties for the luxury. All of which has an extremely promising sound, and is rather amusing. As a matter of fact, I imagine that the average manager trembles in his shoes when he is actually confronted with a new idea, for it means risk, much troublous thought, and dire perplexity.

A hen that digs up a penknife unearths something that it cannot possibly utilize, at which it gazes in sore bewilderment, and at which other hens would be equally perturbed. The theatrical manager is in very much the same plight when he does uncover an idea. What shall he do with it? Upon whom shall he experiment with it? Is it dangerous? Will it prove to be unduly

expensive?

The theatrical manager knows his public, with the swift, unerring judgment displayed by the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker. He is fully aware of the fact that while the dear public imagines that it adores the unconventional and the innovational, it is the good old material that scores. The manager may deem it advisable to give the public some new variation of an old theme—even that is hard to find!

—but a new theme is a fearful speculation.

For instance, the public never tires of all the variations that are played upon the theme of the girl who is lured to her ruin by the plausible, but goodlooking malefactor, who wears kidgloves and spats. Dozens of plays are filled with that antique, but entertaining notion. But suppose that some "audacious" playwright attempted to become dramatic over the woes of the simple, pellucid village boy who was lured to his ruin by the good-looking adventuress who wore a red dress and smoked cigarettes. Can you see the situation and its risk?

The public revels in the story of the plaintive young wife, happily dusting her spotless furniture, while her mind is being poisoned against marital monotony by the specious stranger. Would that public stand for the idea of the unsophisticated young husband, working his poor young fingers to the bone, while some evil-minded stranger-ess poisoned his mind against the saccharine joys of home? Never!

Every play must be full of "love," every play must end happily—to be popular. Every hero must be so nobe that his virtue positively hurts, and every heroine so immaculate that one little sin, for flavoring purposes, would seem delicious. Every villain must get the worst of it in the end, and every

comedy character make humorous remarks on schedule time.

Professional critics deplore the unvarying trend of things dramatic, and in desperation seek out plays that are tracts, dramas of dissertation, and comedies of talk. They prefer that nothing at all should happen than that the same old things should happen so persistently. Note the critical admiration for Shaw, Galsworthy, and their plotless imitators. The truth is that the theatrical manager demands the prescribed idea of all successful plays, served up, perhaps, with a new sauce, or at least with an old sauce disguised.

Let me point out a few of the ideas that have prevailed during the first round of the present new season, and you will realize the aim of the playwrights, to say nothing of the mental condition of the managers who "pre-

sented" them.

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I think I shall give first place to Miss Jane Cowl, because place aux dames sounds so well in French. Miss Cowl is an actress who starred in her own play, "Lilac Time," but this season she decided to offer a little thing of her own called "Daybreak" to others than herself. Miss Cowl's "idea" struck me as being particularly and femininely quaint, and it is worth mentioning for the sake of the possible variations that may subsequently be played upon it.

The heroine of "Daybreak" was married to a gentleman who "drank." (I love the word "drink" without any object to it, such as "lemonade" or "lime juice.") Early in the play, and against all the traditions of the drama, you learned that the heroine had a secret. There was a mystery connected with her. She was very pale and anxious looking and cryptic. It was discovered that she surreptitiously left her home each evening and returned furtively at daybreak. The gentleman who "drank" became most suspicious, especially when one daybreak he actually saw her come

back, with his own vinous eyes. Thereupon he had her watched by detectives, and found that she visited a house in One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street surely a dreadfully named thoroughfare for romance!

Now the sweet little thing could have told him exactly what she went to this house for, in the dead of night. Nothing, however, was farther from her thoughts. The husband suspected all the men in the cast of being her lovers, and when the plot thickened, the hateful knowledge that she was positively leaving home to see a cheeyild was forced upon him. In a tense moment, she dared to admit that the cheeyild was her own!

The elucidation of all this was deliciously simple. The child was perfectly correct, and the gentleman who "drank" was its father, but she wished to keep its birth a secret from him; hence her "daybreak" peregrinations. Isn't that a genuinely lovely idea-so feminine and so capricious? Could any theatrical manager reject such a winsome notion? Miss Cowl offered this quite seriously, with no thought of burlesque, but, to me, the possibilities of it are tremendous. Think of a woman with eleven children, keeping their eleven births secret from her husband and visiting eleven houses all in a row, filled with the little darlings!

For a seemingly novel idea, I therefore place Miss Jane Cowl first, and gladly do it, because she is not only a woman, but an extremely handsome one. I may add that it was gloriously unselfish of her to give this wonderful rôle to Miss Blanche Yurka, because Miss Yurka is really a fine actress.

"The Very Idea," by William Le Baron, was another managerial instance of a new idea—old things being done in a newfangled way. This was the sort of idea that one could not possibly recommend to one's maiden aunt, and its smoking-room dialogue made

an "irresistible appeal," as the saying is. A student of eugenics had a married sister who longed for a child, but who appeared to be unable to indulge. The husband was equally desirous for an heir, but the stork balked. decided to adopt a child, and thereupon the eugenist stepped in with a suggestion. Why not start at the beginning and adopt a child especially designed for the occasion? He believed that the perfect father and mother would beget the perfect child-and so on. His chauffeur was assuredly a perfect specimen of manhood, and the maid in the house looked particularly admirable for maternity. Would they consent to provide a child for adoption? As they happened to be in love with each other, and engaged to be married-which was a mere detail to the eugenist-they would and did consent.

The young couple went to California to await the birth of the adoptable child, and when they came back, it was very soon discovered that their fond wishes were to be realized without the aid of the chauffeur and the maid. The State of California was pronounced to be a wonderful State-more wonderful than the state of maternity-and all ended happily. I have analyzed this idea as carefully as possible, but I can assure you that it loses considerably in the telling-loses a good deal of double You will perceive, however, that there is a newer idea in this farce than in nine-tenths of those presented last season. It seemed to get as far away from the conventions as it conveniently could, but there was no risk in its production-not nearly as much as in its dialogue. The wedding ring was conspicuous throughout, and the honest longings of the childless couple were at least luminously respectable.

In this play, little Ernest Truex, one of our most promising comedians, covered himself with glory. His gestures, his quaint intonations, and his perfect sincerity were admirable. As a fed to young Truex, there was the connently serious Richard Bennett, who gave us that pricelessly wondrous gen entitled "Damaged Goods," in an effort to educate us, as it were.

The idea of "The Lassoo," by Victor Mapes, seemed to be that the movies are, after all, the best refuge for the destitute playwright. That appeared to be novel. As a matter of fact, it merely substituted the modern notion of the movies for other pursuits that the rejected playwright could profitably follow—such as driving a street car or hod carrying or removing garbage cans.

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The hero of "The Lassoo" had written a play that was "turned down" by every manager. Possibly it had an idea or it might not have been turned down. Be that as it may—in the language of George Monroe-the playwright decided to finance his own brain child, and actually did it. He was married, and his wife became inordinately jealous of his leading lady, an idea that is always popular. Probably if the wife had not been jealous of the actress, the play would have been pronounced as "audacious." The hero's self-financed drama proved to be a distressing fiasco, and ruin stared him in the face. His wife was atrociously extravagant—another very popular convention of all successful plays—and insisted upon buying a player piano, which I rather liked as a relief from the eternal automobile. One can respect a woman who favors a player piano, but one must despise the lady who clamors for anything so expensively common as a "car."

The last act of "The Lassoo" occurred in the "studio room of a movie plant." The poor hero, driven to success as a scenario writer, was visited in these strange surroundings by his wife, who had "left" him. During his temporary absence, the wife was harangued by the actress of whom she had

been jealous, and was treated to a most appetizing lecture on the stupidity of her ways. The actress scored; the wife was conscious of her errors; and it all ended in reconciliation and bliss. I leave the idea of this play to your consideration. You may work it out for yourself. It was very charmingly acted by Shelley Hull and Phæbe Foster, as the husband and wife, and by Beatrice Noves as the "actress."

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There is no risk at all in the "movie" idea, and it is the one thing that theatrical managers seem to clamor for at The pictures at one time present. threatened to swamp the poor old legitimate. To-day, managers are getting even by actually introducing the topic of the films into their plays. curred again in the new Potash and Perlmutter arrangement by Montague Glass and Jules Eckert Goodman, called "Business Before Pleasure." It was at least a new idea as far as Potash and Perlmutter were concerned, and the trials and tribulations of the erstwhile cloak-and-suit purveyors were portraved with screaming humor. new industry will be snapped up by the drama, as an apparently novel peg upon which to hang the good old complications. You will undoubtedly be told that in "Business Before Pleasure" there was a new idea. If there had been, the fate of Potash and Perlmutter would have trembled in the balance. As it was, their position never once swerved.

In "The Deluge," adapted from the Swedish of Henning Berger by Frank Allen, the idea was that ten very commonplace people—as people go—would lose all their unpleasant traits if they were suddenly confronted with the certainty of immediate death. In order to induce that condition, you are asked to view these people penned in a barroom by the overflow of the Mississippi River, all escape cut off, the telephone out of commission, the lights elimi-

nated, the end in sight. Of course they are all "types." There is the grouchy promoter full of pessimism; there is the Bible-quoting lawyer, very smug and glib; there is the penitent saloon proprietor; there is the estranged couple. The flood seems to humanize them all and fill them with brotherly love, but at the close of the play, when the deluge was proved to be more imaginary than real, they go back to their customary ways of thought and action.

This not particularly novel idea seemed at least unordinary to theatergoers, and as it was offered by Mr. Arthur Hopkins, who has appeared on several occasions to be clamoring for the unusual, it was hailed as rather daring. However, I found all the trapped people so completely uninteresting that what they did in the presence of death was of just as little consequence as what they did in the presence of life. They were gloomy folks at best, and their "conversation" was awe-inspiring in its hopeless crudity.

This was a case of a seemingly new idea that was treated without imagination or discretion. With other types, I honestly believe that we should have been gulled into the notion that it was epoch-makingly novel, and Mr. Hopkins would have been pinnacled. However, I am of the opinion that this will really happen some day. This manager has proved that he is not at all attached to the cut-and-dried situations. All he needs is a playwright with an utter disregard for the usual. tunately, playwrights need bread and butter, and it is the usual that furnishes these.

"The Inner Man"—which sounded like Barrie's "Little Mary," but had nothing to do with the digestive apparatus—made a very feeble pretense at a new idea in the notion that the worst criminals may be regenerated. As if we had not seen scores of them regenerated for years and years on the stage! Just say, "Mother!" to the most hardened stage criminal, and lo! he bursts into tears and is immediately reformed. The stage "tot" always regenerates the stage malefactor; and once confront him with a honeysuckle cottage, and the memory of his dulcet childhood straightens him out, and he becomes "always good alike"—like that special brand of tea.

Devil Dick, in "The Inner Man," is so notoriously criminal that you scent his reformation as soon as you see him. And of course it occurs, and the audience is supposed to regard it as strikingly novel, because somebody in the first act has wagered ten thousand dollars that he would remain evil! Ten thousand dollars in stage money is not enough to sanction any change in the stage's traditions.

"Maytime," at the Lyric Theater, was

a charming and pathetic musical pl and I unhesitatingly assert that path in the Tired Business Man's brand of entertainment is new! Of course of can easily prove that four episodes, tok ing place at times far apart-the for occurring in 1840 and the last at present time-and showing how poe young lovers grow old and withers were suggested by the little play know as "Milestones" and were not nove But think of tears in a musical show ponder upon the tender, melancholy fl vor actually pervading a form of enter tainment usually associated with ric and rampage, and you will admit the it is possible to transplant an old ide to ground where it will sprout in glory of apparently spectacular novely.

Much that seems old under the somay masquerade as new under the spoilight! And that is the sort of novel that the public apparently wants.



### DECEMBER

THE next number of "the magazine that entertains" will be a notable one. In the first place, you will find the first installment of a new four-par novel by May Edginton, who wrote "The Woman Who Broke the Rule." "Magic Life," this latest story, is in our opinion one of the most interesting of all of Miss Edginton's stories. Hero and heroine thrown together by a shipwreek by no means an original situation in fiction. It is the after developments that make "Magic Life" unusual, to say the least.

The same issue contains, complete, a brilliant novelette by E. Goodwin,

new writer of whom we will have more to say next month.

Adele Luehrmann, author of "The Ghost of Yesterday," has written a facinating series of stories around a young actress seeking an opening "on Broad way." Each tale is complete in itself, and, should you miss one or two of them that will in no way prevent you from enjoying the others. Once you meet Naon Jackson, however, you will be very unlikely to miss any opportunity of seein more of her. Her introductory experience is called "Love and the Rules."

The fiction for December AINSLEE's also includes "Vendetta," a striking little tale by Countess Barcynska; "A Quiet English Home," by Phyllis Bottome "Red and Gray," by A. C. Allenson; and the third sprightly episode of "The

Duchess in Pursuit," by I. A. R. Wylie.

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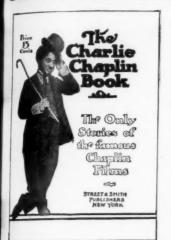
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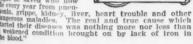


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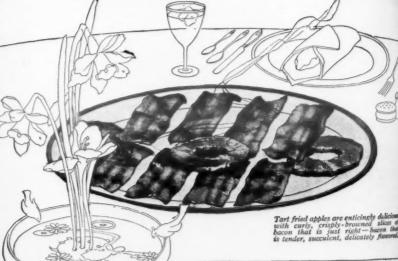
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- Chemistry of the body and the chemistry of food.
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  How foods establish health by removing causes of disease.
- Scientific eating explained, sample mer
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- How to select, proportion
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  your food according to
  age, sample means.
  10. How to select, combine
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  according to occupation
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- The business man-right and wrong ways of liv-ing, sample menus.
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- Superacidity, fermenta-tion, gastric catarrh and ulcer, intestinal gas and auto-intoxication. Causes, sample men
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